

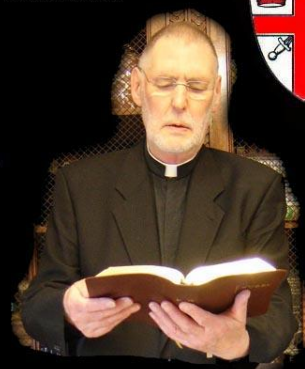


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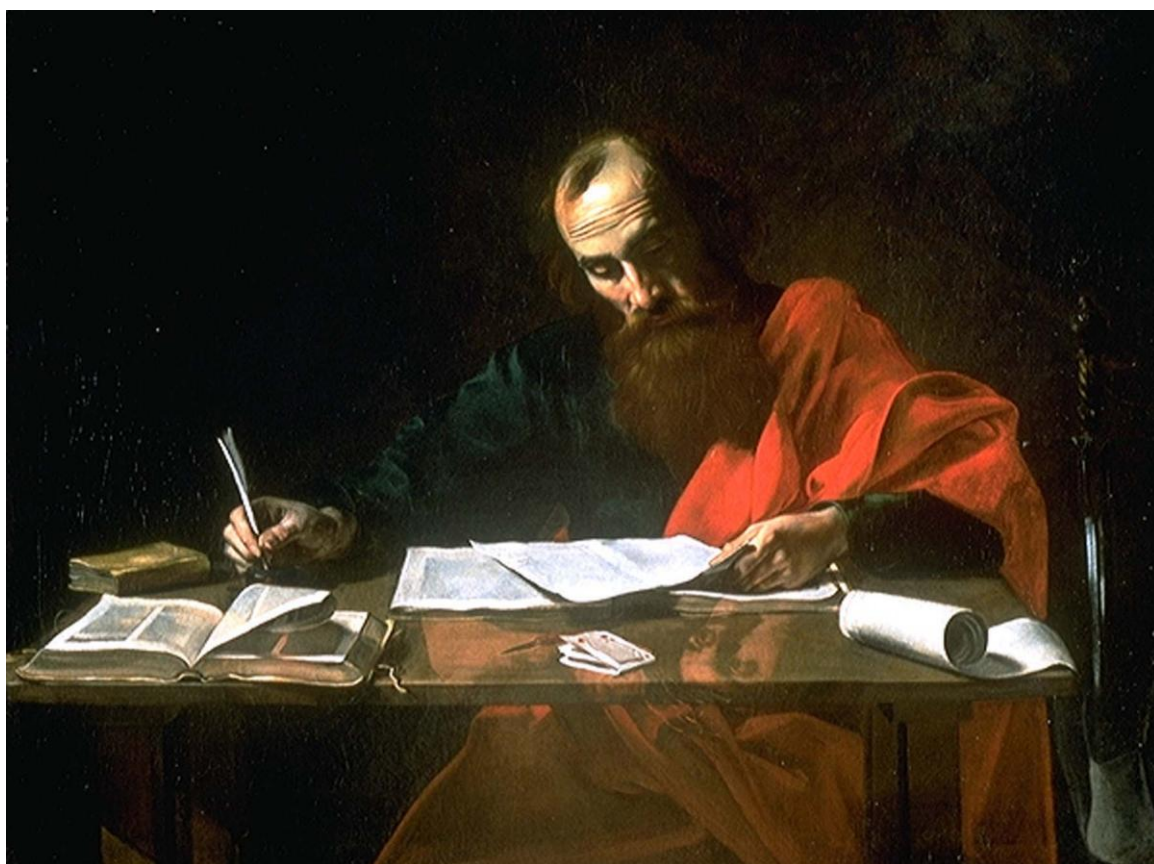
**Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119: 105**



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Evangelical House Churches

Berea Bible Handbook – Part Fifteen
Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians
Research and Study by Rev. Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., D.D.



The Pauline Epistles in the Christian History

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the force that has most profoundly affected Western culture is Christianity. Its influence is so pervasive that we don't even realize its effect; we just take its rules for granted. This essay explores the results of that influence, the possibility that they could have been different, and certainly the hope that they may be altered in the future.

This exploration ends in hope, with the conviction that love, tolerance, acceptance, and compassion were central to Jesus' teaching and will have a profound effect on mankind in the centuries to come. However, it begins with some negative statements about the Church. Please stay with the explanation past the dark beginning to the light at the end.

Why are we saying these things now when they weren't said centuries ago? Probably because people were not given access to the Bible until the 17th Century, and even then knowledge of the content of the Bible was not widespread until the 20th Century. The Church has had such a firm grip on spiritual affairs, often combined with the State, that we simply have not been able to rethink it.

We are also able to look at Christianity, the authorities, and the Bible without fear of being burned at the stake if we disagree with the authorities. That has only been true for a couple of centuries.

The Early Church

In the days after Jesus' death and resurrection, there was no Christian Church as we think of it today. The followers of Jesus were with James, the brother of Jesus in Jerusalem, Peter, and the other apostles. Some suggest they were there with the Essenes, in whose movement they may have been a part, although there is considerable disagreement about that, and the author of Luke, the only history of the early church we have, did not mention them. Outside of the core group were followers who were not willing to convert to Judaism and were simply "believers."

Then Paul, formerly Saul, a Roman citizen and persecutor of the early followers of Jesus, began publicizing Jesus widely. Paul never met Jesus and knew about him only through the stories that were being circulated. Paul and the leaders of the Jerusalem church, Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, were at odds over whether converts must first convert to Judaism before becoming followers of Jesus.

Paul's teachings about Jesus were very different from those of James, Peter, and the others in the Jerusalem group. It is striking that Paul's letters never quote Jesus, rarely refer to Jesus' teachings, and never mention Jesus' life. Paul taught his own version of Jesus' teachings and created his own rules. The Christian Church throughout the 2,000 years since Jesus has been formed by Paul's teachings, not the teachings of James, the brother of Jesus, and, some say, not the teachings of Jesus himself.

The fact that Paul did not present Jesus' teachings in his epistles or his own preaching has been acknowledged for centuries. Only the Church, built around Paul, fails to admit that fact. To see what prominent theologians, authors, and other great thinkers have said about Paul:

The fact that Paul spread his own version of Christianity independent of Jesus' teachings has been well known for centuries. Only the Church doesn't agree to that. Paulianity displays very little of the teachings of the humble Jewish Rabbi, Jesus (Yeshua), and adds much that Jesus would have found appalling.

In *Christ or Paul?*, by Rev. V.A. Holmes-Gore:

"Let the reader contrast the true Christian standard with that of Paul and he will see the terrible betrayal of all that the Master taught. . . . For the surest way to betray a great Teacher is to misrepresent his message. . . . That is what Paul and his followers did, and because the Church has followed Paul in his error it has failed lamentably to redeem the world. . . . The teachings given by the blessed Master Christ, which the disciples John and Peter and James, the brother of the Master, tried in vain to defend and preserve intact were as utterly opposed to the Pauline Gospel as the light is opposed to the darkness."

The great theologian Soren Kierkegaard, in *The Journals*:

"In the teachings of Christ, religion is completely present tense: Jesus is the prototype and our task is to imitate him, become a disciple. But then through Paul came a basic alteration. Paul draws attention away from imitating Christ and fixes attention on the death of Christ The Atoner. What Martin Luther, in his reformation, failed to realize is that even before Catholicism, Christianity had become degenerate at the hands of Paul. Paul made Christianity the religion of Paul, not of Christ. Paul threw the Christianity of Christ away, completely turning it upside down, making it just the opposite of the original proclamation of Christ"

The brilliant theologian Ernest Renan, in his book *Saint Paul*:

"True Christianity, which will last forever, comes from the gospel words of Christ not from the epistles of Paul. The writings of Paul have been a danger and a hidden rock, the causes of the principal defects of Christian theology."

Will Durant, in his *Caesar and Christ*:

"Paul created a theology of which none but the vaguest warrants can be found in the words of Christ. . . . Through these interpretations Paul could neglect the actual life and sayings of Jesus, which he had not directly known. . . . Paul replaced conduct with creed as the test of virtue. It was a tragic change."

Robert Frost, winner of the Pulitzer prize for poetry in 1924,1931,1937 and 1943, in his "A Masque of Mercy":

"Paul he's in the Bible too. He is the fellow who theologized Christ almost out of Christianity. Look out for him."

James Baldwin, the most noted black American author of this century, in his book *The Fire Next Time*:

"The real architect of the Christian church was not the disreputable, sunbaked Hebrew (Jesus Christ) who gave it its name but rather the mercilessly fanatical and self-righteous Paul."

Martin Buber, the most respected Jewish philosopher of this century, in *Two Types of Faith*:

"The Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount is completely opposed to Paul."

The famous mystic, poet and author, Kahlil Gibran, in *Jesus the Son of Man*:

"This Paul is indeed a strange man. His soul is not the soul of a free man. He speaks not of Jesus nor does he repeat His Words. He would strike with his own hammer upon the anvil in the Name of One whom he does not know."

The famous theologian, Helmut Koester, in his *The Theological Aspects of Primitive Christian Heresy*:

"Paul himself stands in the twilight zone of heresy. In reading Paul, one immediately encounters a major difficulty. Whatever Jesus had preached did not become the content of the missionary proclamation of Paul. . . . Sayings of Jesus do not play a role in Paul 's understanding of the event of salvation. . . . Paul did not care at all what Jesus had said. . . . Had Paul been completely successful very little of the sayings of Jesus would have survived."

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence in his "Letter to William Short":

"Paul was the first corrupter of the doctrines of Jesus."

Renowned English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, in his *Not Paul But Jesus*:

"It rests with every professor of the religion of Jesus to settle within himself to which of the two religions, that of Jesus or that of Paul, he will adhere."

The eminent theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur, in his *Church History of the First Three Centuries*:

"What kind of authority can there be for an 'apostle' who, unlike the other apostles, had never been prepared for the apostolic office in Jesus' own school but had only later dared to claim the apostolic office on the basis on his own authority? The only question comes to be how the apostle Paul appears in his Epistles to be so indifferent to the historical facts of the life of Jesus. . . . He bears himself but little like a disciple who has received the doctrines and the principles which he preaches from the Master whose name he bears."

The great Mahatma Gandhi, the prophet of nonviolence who won freedom from England for India in an essay titled "Discussion on Fellowship":

"I draw a great distinction between the Sermon on the Mount of Jesus and the Letters of Paul. Paul's Letters are a graft on Christ's teachings, Paul's own gloss apart from Christ's own experience."

Carl Gustav Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist, in his essay "A Psychological Approach to Dogma":

"Saul's [Paul's name before his conversion] fanatical resistance to Christianity. . . . was never entirely overcome. It is frankly disappointing to see how Paul hardly ever allows the real Jesus of Nazareth to get a word in."

George Bernard Shaw, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925; in his *Androcles and the Lion*:

"There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus. . . . There has really never been a more monstrous imposition perpetrated than the imposition of Paul's soul upon the soul of Jesus. . . . It is now easy to understand how the Christianity of Jesus. . . . was suppressed by the police and the Church, while Paulinism overran the whole western civilized world, which was at that time the Roman Empire, and was adopted by it as its official faith."

Albert Schweitzer, winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize, called "one of the greatest Christians of his time," philosopher, physician, musician, clergyman, missionary, and theologian in his *The Quest for the Historical Jesus and his Mysticism of Paul*:

"Paul. . . . did not desire to know Christ. . . . Paul shows us with what complete indifference the earthly life of Jesus was regarded. . . . What is the significance for our faith and for our religious life, the fact that the Gospel of Paul is different from the Gospel of Jesus?. . . . The attitude which Paul himself takes up towards the Gospel of Jesus is that he does not repeat it in the words of Jesus, and does not appeal to its authority. . . . The fateful thing is that the Greek, the Catholic, and the Protestant theologies all contain the Gospel of Paul in a form which does not continue the Gospel of Jesus, but displaces it."

William Wrede, in his excellent book, *Paul*:

"The oblivious contradictions in the three accounts given by Paul in regard to his conversion are enough to arouse distrust. . . . The moral majesty of Jesus, his purity and piety, his ministry among his people, his manner as a prophet, the whole concrete ethical-religious content of his earthly life, signifies for Paul's Christology nothing whatever. . . . The name 'disciple of Jesus' has little applicability to Paul. . . . Jesus or Paul:

this alternative characterizes, at least in part, the religious and theological warfare of the present day"

Rudolf Bultman, one of the most respected theologians of this century, in his *Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul*:

"It is most obvious that Paul does not appeal to the words of the Lord in support of his. . . . views. when the essentially Pauline conceptions are considered, it is clear that Paul is not dependent on Jesus. Jesus' teaching is -- to all intents and purposes -- irrelevant for Paul."

Walter Bauer, another eminent theologian, in his *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*:

"If one may be allowed to speak rather pointedly the Apostle Paul was the only Arch-Heretic known to the apostolic age."

H.L. Mencken, called one of the most influential American writers of the first half of the 20th century, in his *Notes on Democracy*:

"Is it argued by any rational man that the debased Christianity cherished by the mob in all the Christian countries of today, has any colourable likeness to the body of ideas preached by Christ?

"The plain fact is that this bogus Christianity has no more relation to the system of Christ than it has to Aristotle. It is the invention of Paul and his attendant rabble-rousers--a body of men exactly comparable to the corps of evangelical pastors of today, which is to say, a body devoid of sense and lamentably indifferent to common honesty. The mob, having heard Christ, turned against Him. His theological ideas were too logical and plausible for it, and His ethical ideas were enormously too austere. What it yearned for was the old comfortable balderdash under a new and gaudy name, and that is precisely what Paul offered it. He borrowed from all the wandering dervishes and body-snatchers of Asia Minor, and flavoured the stew with remnants of Greek demonology. The result was a code of doctrines so discordant and so nonsensical that no two men since, examining it at length, have ever agreed upon its precise meaning. Paul remains the arch theologian of the mob. His turgid and witless metaphysics make Christianity bearable to men who would otherwise be repelled by Christ's simple and magnificent reduction of the duties of man to the duties of a gentle-man."

The Central Difference

The central difference between Jesus' teaching and Paul's church was in justification by faith. Paul believed the statement in Ephesians 2:8: "You have been saved by God's love and kindness because you believed. It was not because of anything you did, but it was a gift from God."

Jesus said repeatedly what was reported in John 3:3: "I tell you the truth. No person can see God's kingdom if he is not born again." And in another form in Luke 17:20-21: "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Humankind was to develop its own salvation by changing within. No one would give it to a person as a gift.

Jesus promised the transformation would require work: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7: 13-14) Spiritual development, Jesus assured us, was going to be hard. He described the thought and behavior that should be characteristic of a spiritual person, but said it would take work to attain it. He never suggested that all a person had to do was swear allegiance to him and nothing else would be required.

A few passages later in Matthew, Jesus is reported to have said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." (Matthew 7: 24-27)

Jesus gave the blueprint, but it would require that those receiving it build the house by putting the lessons "into practice." That means someone might hear the words and have the belief in Jesus as the Messiah so they build a house on the words, but if the person doesn't grow spiritually, the words are meaningless--they have a foundation of sand, Jesus said. He made a point of contrasting the two approaches to his teaching: belief is not sufficient, he said; spiritual growth is necessary.

Jesus asserts elsewhere that simply making a statement of belief is insufficient to achieve what he describes: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will

enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:21-27) Evildoers is an appropriate name for many in the church today who confess belief, but whose actions defy Jesus' words about living in love; that is especially true of those who sexually abuse children or protect the perpetrators.

Jesus states explicitly that the person who will live in the kingdom of God that is within, for eternity, is the one who loves God and loves his neighbour:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" [Jesus] replied. "How do you read it?"

He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-37)

Jesus makes no mention of believing in him as the Messiah as a requirement to inherit eternal life, even when asked directly what one must do!

Because a believer in Paul's church needed only make a statement of belief to fulfil all the requirements of Paul's Christianity, no expectation of spiritual growth was included in the new church. Not surprisingly, after two millennia of Paul's church, little advancement in spiritual maturity among Christians and in the church as a whole has resulted. Neither the church nor the believers have been able to see the kingdom of God within as Jesus described it. The societies founded on Paul's teaching bear no resemblance to the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching.

Understanding Paul and His Time

I believe that the scholars have portrayed Paul accurately, and it must be acknowledged that Paul's theology formed the Western Christian church (beginning with the Roman Catholic Church). However, Paul undoubtedly had the best of intentions based on his view of what was happening to humanity. Understanding Paul and his time will explain why he disregarded Jesus's teachings and created a church based on one creed that was not in Jesus's teaching: believe in Jesus as Messiah to be saved.

Paul's conversion experience described by the author of Luke and alluded to by Paul in his epistles must have had a profound affect on Saul, persecutor of the followers of Jesus. He left his preoccupations and occupation and embarked on arduous journeys to tell humankind about Jesus. In the end, he was killed for his belief, without recanting. The experience in which he spoke with Jesus after his death had been life-changing.

It had such a profound effect on Paul that he dedicated himself to telling others to believe in Jesus as the Messiah Israel had been waiting for. But he wasn't expecting Jesus to delay returning for a few decades, and certainly not for two millennia. He was sure Jesus was going to return in a few days or weeks, but certainly within his lifetime. So there was no time to lose. People had to hear about Jesus and believe in him to become part of the elect who would inherit the kingdom. Converting the gentiles might also hasten Jesus's return.

That being true, talk of brotherly love, ethics, conduct, and spiritual growth was less important, even superfluous. Why would people need to grow to learn how to forgive others, not judge others, pray for their enemies, or follow any of the other spiritual teachings of Jesus when the Kingdom of God was going to be established in a few days or weeks? There would be no life in which spiritual growth would matter.

What was important was conversion--belief in Jesus as the messiah. Paul had a genuine zeal to bring belief to the world before the end. He first wished for conversion among the Hebrews, but that was difficult because of Jesus's ignominious death, which scandalized the Jews. The Messiah couldn't have been killed by the Romans as slaves were executed: through crucifixion. Paul probably had greater success with the "god fearers," groups of people at every Synagogue who admired Judaism and observed many of its practices, but were not willing to be circumcised or follow Mosaic Law. Paul had the answer; they could join a Jewish group without following these requirements. The final group he appealed to was the Greek and Latin gentiles, who could believe in Jesus as a

saviour, but wouldn't have to convert to Judaism, follow Mosaic law, or understand the notion of a Jewish Messiah.

Paul described his zeal and adaptation of his message in I Corinthians 8:19-23:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Since the remaining days were few, conduct, Jewish observances, and spiritual growth were subordinated to conversion to the point that they were minimized or discarded. He wrote stirring words about love, especially in I Corinthians 13, but his focus wasn't upon helping the communities grow spiritually; belief meant everything. His admonitions about love and peace came only when the communities had conflict that threatened his mission.

And so Paul set about with great zeal converting everyone who would listen. He didn't want to lose valuable time explaining Jesus' teachings; converts simply had to believe. The result was that the church Paul founded focused entirely on belief, with little regard for love, morality, ethics, and spiritual growth. Circumcision and the Mosaic law, especially concerning diet, were obstacles for converting Gentiles, so he expunged them from the new church. Nothing mattered for him except bringing the Jews, the "god fearers," and the Gentiles to belief so they would be part of the kingdom of God. He also likely believed that converting the Gentiles would hasten Jesus' parousia (Second Coming).

Paul was also heavily influenced by the Hellenistic Mystery Religions. These religions were well known to the gentiles he was attempting to convert, and in his willingness to change his message to suit his audience, he re-characterized the Jesus he never knew to fit the Hellenistic religions. Central to them were the violent deaths of Osiris, Attis, Adonis, and Dionysus that brought eternal life to their initiates. Paul added the interpretation of Jesus' mission as being killed to save humankind.

The mystery religions during Paul's time

This explanation of Paul and the Mystery Religions is intended to help you understand how the church replaced Jesus' teachings with a mythology that was current in the religions that appealed to the gentiles during his time. It is, in the end, a support for Jesus' teachings, not an attempt to disgrace them.

If you haven't heard about Mithras yet, you will in the next few years. There are many who are so disillusioned with the church that they want to destroy everything associated with it, and in so doing, they would heave Jesus' teachings onto the compost pile with the tattered remnants of the church. That must not happen. I explain Mithras and the man-god mythologies here so we can separate them from Jesus and embrace his teachings; I do not present them to denigrate Jesus.

The early followers of Jesus in the Jerusalem church had the problem of appealing to the Jews, who saw Jesus' ignominious death as scandalizing. Paul had the same problem in appealing to the Jews, but he and the Greco-Roman missionaries also had the problem of converting the pagans, who didn't understand the conception of a Jewish messiah. But the time was short—they had to bring as many pagan converts into the fold as possible so they "would not perish, but have eternal life."

The beliefs of the Jewish followers of Jesus were still Jewish; Jesus was the messiah who would return and rout the Romans to establish the Kingdom of Israel. However, those appealing to the pagans and god fearers (non-Jews who worshiped with the Jews) had to make some changes in their presentation of Jesus for non-Jewish hearers. The promise for the pagan converts was that Jesus was a Messiah for all of humankind (not just the Jews) and that they could have eternal life without becoming Jews by just believing that Jesus was the messiah for humankind, whom they termed the saviour. The pagan converts would then not "die," but would have eternal life because of their belief.

These missionaries to the pagans had a major problem, however. Many pagans believed in a god named Mithra (or Mithras). Mithra was an ancient god, so he had tradition and the sacred tenor that an ancient history brings, just as Yahweh had for the Jews. He dated from around 1400 BCE, before Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. However, Mithra was even more widely accepted than Yahweh, Moses' god. He was known, in various forms, in India, Persia, Greece, and throughout the Roman Empire. For the Greeks and Romans in the first century, Mithras (with an "s") was the chief figure in a mystery religion called Mithraism that held prominence in the Roman Empire all the way through third

century CE, especially among the military. His influence spread as far north as Hadrian's Wall and Germany.

So the followers of Jesus had to convince the followers of Mithras that they should abandon Mithras and follow Jesus. That would be today like standing outside St. Paul's Cathedral handing out leaflets telling Roman Catholics they should abandon Jesus Christ and follow a new God named Paul Bunyon.

But Jesus and Mithras had something important in common. Mithra's followers were promised immortality and he had been entombed and rose from the dead, proving that immortality was available to those who believed in him. The promise of immortality and his rising from the dead were also the central tenets of Jesus' message as the early church promulgated it. Those weren't the central tenets of Jesus' message as he gave it, but the early church was intent on converting people because they were certain Jesus was going to return any minute to establish the Kingdom of God and as many people as possible needed to be converted to get them into the fold before the return. The promise to entice them to convert was eternal life in Jesus Christ's Kingdom of God.

But Mithras already promised eternal life in Mithras' Kingdom of God, so why should the Mithraites convert to following Jesus? Paul and the other followers of Jesus outside of the Jerusalem church took care of the problem. They just made some adjustments in the story of Jesus' life so the pagan believers in Mithras would feel at home with the Jewish Messiah. In the earliest sources (Paul's letters, written around 50 CE to 65 CE, a very early gospel termed the Q source we know from sayings in Luke and Matthew that are not in Mark, written before 70 CE, and Mark, the earliest gospel, written just after 70 CE), there was no miraculous birth and only modest supernatural occurrences in Jesus' life. By the time Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels (around 90 CE), the story was quite different; Jesus had a host of supernatural events surrounding his birth and death. The question is, where did these events suddenly come from?

We find them in Mithras. The missionaries promoting Jesus as the messiah for humankind simply wrote them into the narrations about Christ. A list of characteristics of Mithras follows. Remember that **these were centuries old before Jesus was even born**. You'll see what was borrowed to make Jesus more appealing to the pagan Mithraites:

1. Mithras was born of a virgin who was given the title of "Mother of God"
2. Mithras was born on December 25. Before Constantine (a follower of Mithras) changed the date, the birth date Jesus'

followers observed was January 6. However, Jesus' birth, based on the descriptions, would actually have been in the spring.

3. Mithras was born in a cave (stable), and his birth was attended by shepherds bearing gifts.
4. Mithras was considered a great travelling teacher and master.
5. Mithras had 12 companions or disciples.
6. Mithras performed miracles.
7. Mithras' followers were baptized.
8. Mithras suffered to bring salvation to a sin-cursed humankind.
9. Mithras was buried in a tomb and rose after three days. (Jesus rose after a day and a half, but the gospel accounts used the three days to fit with Mithras' story, in spite of the obvious disparity in the timeline.)
10. Mithras' resurrection was celebrated every year.
11. Mithras ascended into heaven after finishing his deeds.
12. Mithras' followers were promised immortality.
13. Mithras was called "the good shepherd" and identified with both the lamb and the lion.
14. Mithras was called the "way, the truth and the light," "logos," "word," "redeemer," "saviour" and "messiah."
15. On the Judgment Day, Mithras would use the keys of heaven to unlock the gates of Paradise to receive the faithful. All the unbaptized living and dead would perish.
16. Mithra's sacred day was Sunday, called the "Lord's day" because Mithraism was a sun religion. Jesus Christ's sacred day was changed from the Jewish Sabbath, Saturday, to match Mithras' day.
17. Mithras had his principal festival on the day that was later to become Easter for Christians.
18. Mithras' religion had a Eucharist or "Lord's Supper," at which Mithras said, "He who shall not eat of my body nor drink of my blood so that he may be one with me and I with him, shall not be saved."
19. On a final day of judgment, the dead would resurrect and in a final conflict, the existing order would be destroyed and light would triumph over darkness.

Since all of these characteristics of Mithras predated Jesus Christ by fourteen hundred years, Mithraism could not have copied the Jesus story; it had to be the

reverse. These details about Jesus were not in the earliest sources. They appeared later.

The early followers of Jesus had the best of intentions, and the parallel in the promise of eternal life between Jesus and Mithras was so clear, that they felt justified in adding to Jesus' story between the times of the Mark and the Q document (50 CE – 70 CE) and the writing of the later gospels (90 CE – 110 CE). The writers of the gospels and Paul didn't know Jesus, so they weren't really acquainted with him or his teachings. They just had the written and oral stories about him. It was quite easy to embellish the accounts to add Mithras' characteristics to make Jesus look more appealing to the Mithraites and other pagans.

Paul contributed to that inclination. His focus on a suffering, sacrificial Christ for the salvation of humankind was undoubtedly influenced by Mithras worship. Paul lived in Tarsus, where the Mysteries of Mithras had originated. He seems also to have been heavily influenced by the Greek Christos images of a god-king who dies as an offering to a divine being to save humankind. Those influences helped shape Paul's focus on the Messiah bringing salvation and on belief as the only requirement for converts; spiritual growth as Jesus described it didn't enter into Mithras worship, the Greek Christos, or Paul's teaching.

Jesus abhorred violence and sacrifice, yet his story grew to be one of God sacrificing his son. Jesus repeatedly called himself "Son of Man" (meaning human being) and "Son of God" (meaning servant of God). Yet the early church raised him to a Mithraic man-god.

In the second century CE, there was a resurgence of Mithras worship throughout the Roman Empire. What was especially attractive to the Romans was that Mithraism had rituals of worship observance and control, traits the bureaucratic, militaristic Romans found appealing. Mithraism was most popular among the military. When Constantine, who was a follower of Mithras, threw his political support behind Christianity in 321 CE, he expected the same ritual and control. The Christian church was happy to adapt to his wishes.

Constantine maintained his ties to Mithraism while professing to be a Christian. The rituals of Mithraism were important for the church to carry over to retain favour with the Roman Empire, so it simply adopted them. It was Constantine who changed the birth date for Jesus from January 6 to December 25, Mithras' birthday. Customs such as dipping the fingers in holy water and making the sign of the cross were borrowed from Mithraism. The Mithraic cult was male-dominated, with men called "Fathers." The members below them were called

"brothers." The Mithraic fathers wore the mitre caps the Christian bishops adopted and still wear today; the Mithraic Holy Father wore a red cap and garment, had an official ring, and carried a shepherd's staff. He was located in Rome. The Christian Bishop of Rome adopted all of these trappings. Christianity enthusiastically took on the traditions and rituals of Mithraism, making its rituals virtually indistinguishable from the Mithraic rituals. After the fourth century, the two religions had been blended into the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

There were so many similarities between Christianity and Mithraism that early church fathers such as Tertullian and Justin Martyr claimed that centuries before Jesus' birth, Satan had created a false religion that shared many of the same rituals, traditions and beliefs Christianity would contain centuries later, in order to mislead people away from Jesus after his birth and death. The explanation was so outrageous that it was never taken seriously. However, it was an admission of the fact that the customs, stories, and rituals central to Christianity were identical to those in Mithraism.

The transgression wasn't so much in embellishing Jesus' story; it was in the fact that the church leaders from the first century on focused solely on conversion and belief while neglecting Christ's teachings about spirituality and the example of his life that modelled his teachings. Today, we know information about Jesus and his times that the people didn't know in the first three centuries after his time, and in fact no one has known during the two millennia since his life. Today, we know the truth.

We now have two choices:

1. Continue to focus on assent to a creed and the Mithraic embellishments that made a man-god of Jesus and created a Mithraic, ritualistic, controlling church;

OR

2. Resurrect Jesus's teachings and example so we grow spiritually ourselves and we help humankind to grow into the Kingdom of God Jesus envisioned.

I fervently pray for and dedicate my life to supporting the change to following Jesus' teachings as he spoke them prior to 30 CE

In 48 or 49 CE, he was summoned to Jerusalem by the leaders there to explain why he was abandoning Jewish Torah law and inserting the Greek Mystery

Religion atonement death belief system. Paul downplayed the extent of his change from Jesus' teaching, asking only that the gentiles not be required to convert to Judaism to become followers of Jesus. He was thus confirmed in the role of "apostle to the Gentiles," with full permission to enroll Gentiles in the messianic movement without requiring full conversion to Judaism. But it is clear that Peter and James had no real understanding of Paul's revolutionary thinking that departed from what they knew of Jesus' teaching.

However, when Peter visited Paul in Antioch and became aware of the full extent of Paul's views, a serious rift began between Pauline and Jewish views of Jesus' teaching. At a second conference in Jerusalem, around 55 CE, James accused Paul of teaching Jews "to turn their backs on Moses" (Acts 21:21). Again, however, Paul evaded the charge by concealing his views, and he agreed to undergo a test of his own observance of the Torah. His deception, however, was detected by a group of "Asian Jews" (probably Jewish Christians) who were aware of his real teaching. A stormy protest ensued. Paul feared for his life and was rescued by the Roman police, to whom he declared that he was a Roman citizen so they would protect him. This announcement surprised the apostles in Jerusalem because the Romans were their chief enemy. It was the end of Paul's association with the Jerusalem Church. And in a sense, it was the beginning of Christianity as we know it today.

Paul managed to marry the most attractive elements of Judaism and the Greek Mystery Religions, making this new belief in Jesus attractive to the gentiles, who admired Judaism but were not willing to convert (because of the Mosaic law requirements and circumcision), and who knew and were committed to the Mystery Religions. The new religion was a fabrication containing little of the teachings of the Jewish Rabbi, Jesus ben Yosef, who taught in the hills of the Galilee.

The Church Never Reconsidered Paul in Light of Jesus' Teaching

Unfortunately, as the years dragged on with no return of the Jesus Christ the church had created, the rigid religion that had evolved would not reconsider Jesus' teachings. Generations of people were living and dying while waiting for the second coming, and they needed to grow in love and compassion to establish the Kingdom of God Jesus described. However, focusing on the individual communing with God and growing through understanding and wisdom would have diminished the church's control--people would have grown closer to God and further from the church. The powerful, wealthy church leaders were loathe to give up the control and power they held, so they kept the flock in fear and obedience by subjugating Jesus to the church's control.

At the Council of Nicea in 325, nearly three centuries and 10 or so generations after Jesus' death, the church still focused on belief in the Messiah, preparing for the second coming. Spiritual growth remained superfluous, as it had been for Paul.

The church had no substance other than the belief and salvation creed, so Jesus's birth, death, resurrection, and divinity came to dominate everything about the church and church practices. Jesus' teachings were relegated to meaningless words recited mindlessly in a liturgy that became increasingly complicated and filled with repetitious rituals and regalia. The crucifix became the central icon because of the focus on the sacrifice of Christ and requirement of belief.

The church based on Jesus, who focused on love, evolved into an organization based on fear. In countries where the church had more power, there was more fear. Hell gained in prominence to frighten nonbelievers into conversion and keep believers from straying from the church's grasp. The church began selling indulgences by promoting the fear that loved ones were to spend aeons in purgatory or be consigned to hell if the survivors didn't pay. Amid this harsh atmosphere of repression and fear, Mary, the mother of Jesus, became deified because she was the gentle, feminine figure who could intercede to enhance a worshiper's stature with Jesus to avoid hell and enter heaven.

And so, for the millennia that followed, Paul's zeal to convert people before what he believed to be the imminent coming of the end in the first century continued to dominate Christianity; time had stood still. In Dark Age Europe after the fall of Rome, the focus remained on conversion and belief, even though Paul's bones, along with his expectation for an imminent return, had been cold and dead for centuries. In the Middle Ages, Jesus' teachings remained in abeyance while the church built magnificent cathedrals and developed elaborate liturgies. At the Reformation, the Protestant church didn't use the new broom to sweep out the antiquated expectations Paul held and inaugurate an era of spiritual growth based on Jesus' teachings. During the revivals in American Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century, no firebrand preachers returned to Jesus' creed to show the world they were his followers by having love for one another; instead, the preachers bellowed that the sinners must repent and believe to avoid hell's fires.

And today, 2,000 years after Jesus' death, the church still maintains Paul's focus on a belief that he held because he was sure spiritual growth and conduct were inconsequential--the end times were a few days away.

However, over the centuries, the requirement to believe has been expanded: people must believe in the church as well as the Messiah. The conversion is not complete or genuine unless the person obeys the rules the Church asserts as dogma. The Christian Church speaks for God. No other approach to God is true; in fact, other interpretations of God, Jesus, or church doctrines are inspired by Satan. The pages of text you are reading now will be dismissed as Satanic. Because Jesus' teachings were regarded as inconsequential, the West experienced no spiritual growth for the two millennia since his death. Instead, the Church's requirement for conversion and its burgeoning power and wealth resulted in 2,000 years of pressure to conform, torture, and widespread murder. Since the only worthy people in the universe were those who agreed with Paul's interpretation of Jesus and followed Paul's rules, all other human beings were pagan rabble who could be conquered, subjugated, and killed unless they converted. Armies led by Christian banners slaughtered Muslims, Native Americans, Jews, suspected witches, reformers, and countless millions on every continent of the globe, all because a religious leader in the first century believed people must be converted to save their souls.

Even within the Church, groups who do not obey the Pauline rules and believe the Pauline truths are ostracized. The intolerance of the Church has provided justification for ethnic, national, gender, sexual, and racial bigotry, with the assurance that the Church condones condemnation and violence against those the Church-related groups abhor.

On the interpersonal level, one person to another, Christians, bolstered by the Church's intolerance, lord over other people, castigating them for not following the rules, browbeating them about their lifestyles, and cutting off relationships or sending transgressors out of families because they don't follow religious practices and rules the self-righteous churchgoers require. They could not do that if the Church didn't tolerate it and provide the model for it. The source is the Pauline focus on intolerant belief with no regard for love and compassion.

In the end, Paul's theology separated man from God. Within the Pauline Church, following Paul's model, the knowledgeable few interpret God for the ignorant many. Until the 16th century, common people were not even permitted to read the Bible, much less seek God and listen to the Holy Spirit individually, in their hearts.

Those who disagree with the knowledgeable were killed, but today are simply asked to leave the Church. Under no circumstances is an individual to interpret God's will without the intervention of the knowledgeable who derive their power from the writings of the earlier authorities, especially Paul. Common people

may pray to God, but the answers they receive must match the answers condoned by the knowledgeable authorities. Anyone who speaks directly to God and receives answers not sanctioned by the knowledgeable authorities was burned at the stake as a heretic (and is today castigated in the media, excommunicated, or denied tenure).

This unyielding intolerance and the adamant requirement that all people in all cultures must obey the Church to be considered worthy of even existing, have led Western civilization into a focus on a physical-world religion with external rules and away from the inner realm where Jesus said we must be born again and the kingdom of God resides. It has created the opportunity for all of the abuses that come from the physical realm: corruption, arrogance, bigotry, intolerance, sadism, and even sexual abuse. And in the end, as people abandon this repressive church, they abandon God.

The idea that the Church must intervene between man and God, and that the God in all of us isn't powerful enough to speak to us individually, is so much a part of our culture and thinking that we don't question it. We would never think of receiving personal messages from God without the Church, the minister/priest, and the Bible telling us what God is saying. We think someone who says he hears from God is crazy! That isn't what Jesus taught us or wants for us; it was taught to us by the Church.

Pauline Christianity, in other words, has profoundly separated man from God.

At the same time, its arrogance and intolerance have fostered remarkable violence, cruelty, and sexual and psychological abuse. It has effectively separated man from man.

And it has taught that man cannot trust his own instincts and the inner voice that speaks to him about what is right, good, and compassionate. It has assuredly separated man from himself.

Jesus' Teachings:

Love God and Love Others Unconditionally

Paul's requirement to profess belief in a creed was not part of Jesus' teaching, but striving for spiritual growth to have a loving, compassionate society was:

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

At the Last Supper, giving those closest to him the words he wanted them to carry with them to the world about his teachings, a summary of his ministry, he said

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:34-35)

There is no room for telling someone he can't be in the church because he's a homosexual or doesn't go to church every Sunday or doesn't give a dime in the offering plate. Jesus doesn't say, people will know you follow my teachings if you harass others into converting and coming to church or if you tell someone they aren't welcome in church because of their beliefs or if you rid the church of homosexuals. The intolerance, cruelty, and hate in the last 2,000 years of Christianity and in today's churches comes from Christians, not from Christ.

Do Not Judge Others--Be Tolerant and Accepting

The Gospels show that Jesus taught acceptance, love, tolerance, and compassion, without judgment of others. He undoubtedly said what was reported in Matthew about the requirement never to judge another under any circumstances:

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5)

In effect, we will never be so perfect we can state a judgment to someone else about that person's imperfections--we have a plank of wood ten feet long, twelve inches wide, and two inches thick in our own eye; what nerve we have to tell someone else about the speck of dust in her eye! When we get the plank of wood out of our eye, then maybe we can tell someone else about a little speck in her eye. **But we'll never get rid of every speck of that plank from our own eye!**

That's what Jesus was saying. We'll never be perfect enough to judge another or cast the first stone. So just don't do it.

No person was unworthy in Jesus' eyes. You know the story of the adulteress brought to Jesus. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:3-6) They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

Here's what's important. Even the Pharisees knew that this man Jesus, who was astounding everyone with his wisdom, was teaching his followers to be compassionate and tolerant. **Jesus' teaching was so clear about tolerance, love, forgiveness, and acceptance that everyone knew it, even the Pharisees.** The law said an adulteress should be stoned. No one defied the law--they wouldn't even think about it. It would be like us today thinking it would be OK to rob a bank or run all of the red lights we come to.

The Pharisees went to the trouble of setting up this whole thing because they knew he would not condemn even an adulteress, a person who had broken God's law as they interpreted it. Instead, he would accept her. They thought he would say, "I don't care what the law says; don't stone her. She has just made a mistake, but we must forgive and accept her as we must forgive and accept anyone, regardless of what they do or have done." They then would have had cause to stone him because he was party to her guilt; that was the law too.

They were sure he would fall into that trap because love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness were central to Jesus' teachings and everyone who heard of Jesus heard that about him, even the Pharisees. There was no Bible with Jesus's words in it then. It was the way Jesus lived his life, and the central message of his teachings. The Pharisees chose that teaching of Jesus to trap him because they knew he was so strong about it that he would never condemn the woman.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. We don't know what he wrote. When they kept questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Jesus took the responsibility from a faceless crowd judging the woman in God's name and placed it in the hands of each individual, saying, "If you can stand before God now having never made a mistake, go ahead, throw the first stone." He was restating his fundamental teaching: "First, take the plank out of your

own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

He was saying, yet again, "Unless you're perfect, don't judge." Here, in fact, he was taking it a step further: "If you ever have sinned, don't judge." He put his life in danger to say that.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:10-11)

Those words should reverberate in the minds of every person who claims to follow Jesus: **"Then neither do I condemn you."** Where can those who profess to follow Jesus find room in that statement to be intolerant of anyone: Jews, atheists, women, rock stars, homosexuals, people of colour, people who never go to church, adulterers, thieves?

He didn't tell her she was wicked and he wouldn't accept her if she didn't change her ways, that she wouldn't go to Heaven, that she shouldn't come to church until she straightens up. The word, "sin," meant "mistake" in the Greek words used to write the original text of the Bible, not what it means today: an act not approved by God. He said, don't make the same mistakes again! And I accept you, unconditionally!

Jesus said to his disciples, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The zealots in the church today who condemn people who make mistakes or don't live life the way they require them to live it are, by Jesus's words, not followers of Jesus.

People Should Approach God Personally, without the Church and Minister/Priests

The records of Jesus' words in the Gospels also show that Jesus wanted people to approach God individually and commune with God without the layers of rules and intercession of a knowledgeable hierarchy of priests. Of the more than sixty times in the Bible the words pray, prayer, or prayed are said by or descriptive of Jesus, only three relate to praying in public. He told his followers to commune with God individually, and never said don't trust the answers God gives them. He never once said "Go ahead and pray, but check out the answers you receive from God by getting approval from the priest/minister."

When Jesus defied the law in the scriptures and the Church, he asked the people who had assembled planning to stone the adulteress to search their own hearts individually. He said, in effect, "Disregard the law and look inside. Look at your spirit. If you find yourself to be perfect and blameless, then you can cast the first stone." And the converse is equally true: "But if you find that you, yourself, have had mistakes in your life, then you can't administer this Church law. You should be tolerant, accepting, and forgiving over any law set forth by the Church." The rules of the Church are not as important as the personal, inner searching you do about your relationship to God and to those around you.

The two times Jesus emphasized the importance of loving God and loving others, he prefaced the teaching with "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" and "A new command I give you." The laws have been replaced by the admonition to love.

The words reported in Matthew and Luke as spoken by Jesus resonate with his entire ministry.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." . . . [Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer and said a parable, then replied,] "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:1-13)

Jesus said ask and God will give you the Holy Spirit with the knowledge you ask for. He didn't reply to the disciple saying "Pray, then ask the priest what God's answer is" or "Pray only in the presence of a minister so the minister can give you God's answer" or "Pray, then study the Scriptures to see what the answer is." Jesus was answering the question about how the disciples should pray: "Your prayer is a question and your Father will send the Holy Spirit to answer; your prayer is a knock at the door and your Father will send the Holy Spirit to open the door; your prayer is seeking and your Father will send the Holy Spirit to make sure you find."

The Church ignores these very clear words of Jesus about love, acceptance, tolerance, and the importance of a personal relationship to God without a Church or minister/priest intervening; the reason is that Paul described a Church

hierarchy and the leaders' exclusive power over people. He believed the churches had to stay intact while gaining more converts--Jesus was returning any minute. Paul was also dynamic. He likely felt he and the leaders of the church could do a better job of evangelism than God within.

At its root, the Pauline reliance on strict rules, scriptural backing for the injunctions, full-time minister/priests who must tell people about God, and evangelical campaigns to "sell" God, reveal a remarkable absence of trust and faith. It suggests that God simply isn't powerful enough to do the job; God can't get it right. At worst, it is almost agnostic: they don't seem to have confidence that there even is a God who can have any influence over the people. The Church fills the void and presents God in the ways that suit its purposes.

Jesus said the Father would send the Holy Spirit to anyone who asked. What is it that the church thinks it can provide that God can't?

What Could Have Resulted from 2,000 Years of Teaching Tolerance, Love, and Compassion

Had the last 2,000 years been dominated by Jesus' teachings that focus on tolerance, love, and compassion, our culture might be quite different today. Norms in a culture are built slowly, over time. The norms in Western culture today have been built by Pauline intolerance. Had Jesus' teachings predominated, our culture today would have been built by the millions of faithful following the teachings that would have created a loving, tolerant, compassionate society. Today, we would have had 2,000 years of people looking for ways to demonstrate their love for one another. The rules would not have dominated church activity. Instead, expressions of love, rewards for loving acts, and encouraging learning ways to show love would be the common content of Church teachings and practice.

People would be reaching out to other groups they don't understand with tolerance and hope for understanding. The Church would be at the forefront of showing people how to follow Jesus' lead in accepting all people, regardless of their station, beliefs, or practices. He illustrated the importance of tolerance by embracing the abhorred Roman tax collectors, adulterers, the homeless, Samaritans, and all others who were ostracized from Jewish society. In this world based on Jesus' teachings of tolerance and compassion, no one would be intolerant of others. All those who are different would belong.

People would care for one another and give all they have to help others to be comfortable. There would be no competition, backbiting, gossiping, and efforts

to destroy other people. The Church wouldn't condone it. The 2,000 years of living Jesus' teaching would have resulted in a compassionate culture.

All would be encouraged to find God and commune with God in their own ways. The lessons they learned as they commune with God would be valued, and would teach others as they found their own individual relationship with God. The inner self, prayer, meditation, and direct communion with God, would be the norm. No external intercession by others between man and God would be necessary or tolerated.

Other beliefs would be understood and accepted. The religions all agree that God is the originator of love and that God wants man to live in harmony and peace with other men. The differences come in the manners in which people want to enjoy their relationships with God. Some bow to Mecca five times a day; some light candles; some set objects afloat on a river; some eat bread and drink wine to symbolize the body and blood of their leader; some dance around stones in the middle of a field; some walk through a forest.

The manner in which people approach God tells us about the people, not God. That seems so obvious in the face of the thousands of religions that exist that I am incredulous that anyone could claim that there is only one right, true manner of communing with God that is sanctioned by the One God--and it's mine.

The One God is shared by all faiths who approach God through a great variety of practices. The problem comes when someone demands that everyone participate in his practice, saying God has told him his is the only one God accepts, and condemns all of the other practices. What arrogance! In the face of thousands of different ways of approaching God, some claim theirs is the only right one and all of the rest are delusions. And in the process, they fly into rages that diminish their love for man that is the primary injunction in virtually all of these religions.

The Pauline church is remarkably intolerant of religious practices, even among the followers of Jesus, and enforces separation of man from man.

When we have 2,000 years of following the guidance from God in us, as taught by Jesus and others, then the guidance from God in us will result in a moral consciousness that will transcend all of the ego-centralism and violence we see in the world today. Where can we hide from ethics and morality when God is One with us?

Our Inner Voice, the Holy Spirit, Teaches Us

The spirit of God in us teaches us. External teachings may help us to understand, but they are only stimulants to help us as we journey on our path toward greater self-understanding, love, and communion with God. The final determiner of Truth is what resonates with our spirits. God is not in a book. God is in us. We are One with God.

That is why our inner voice has always been uncomfortable with some of the teachings of the Church:

1. that only some people will have eternal life and those God doesn't like will suffer intolerably in Hell for eternity
2. that some people are not worthy of being accepted as they are and must change their ways before we or God will accept them
3. that God has such a weak ego that he created people to worship him
4. that God lives in Heaven, somewhere in outer space, and just comes to visit in church on Sundays
5. that God made a mistake and created an evil being so powerful that even God can't control him, and consequently God has to powerlessly let Satan prey on God's beloved children
6. that the God in us isn't as powerful as the God that was in Paul, so we won't get God's message listening to the God in us and we need to listen to Paul instead, or actually, we need to listen to the minister-priest who tells us what Paul really meant because the God in the minister-priest is more powerful than the God that is in us, and we won't understand the God in the book without the minister-priest, but the God in the minister-priest still isn't as powerful as the God that was in Paul, so the minister-priest has to listen to the God in the book so he can tell us what God is telling us
7. that only one of the many books about God is the right book, and it's my book, and only one interpretation of the book is the right one, and it's my interpretation, and all the rest of the books were created by Satan, and all of those who don't agree with my interpretation are minions of Satan
8. that God is in the book, not in nature, not in you, and not in me, and that whatever the book says is true while what nature or our hearts tell us about God is lies if it doesn't agree with

the book; but I have to interpret the book for you and my interpretation is right even though hundreds of other people reading the same book have different interpretations

9. that we can only apprehend God in a place where a knowledgeable person can tell us about God, so Sunday morning has to be spent in church, not in nature or with a few loving friends at home, or helping people in the local nursing home, and the seating has to be in a square, with everyone facing the knowledgeable minister/priest speaking while we all listen quietly because we are ignorant and God is in the minister/priest, but not in us

The reason our inner spirit has such difficulty with these teachings of the Church is that they're simply not true. Just as a teenager's body coughs to tell her that first cigarette is not good for her, our spirits cough at these teachings from the Church. Our spirit, God in us, is telling us they're not true.

God isn't in the clouds or the church or the minister-priest. God in us teaches us, independent of the book and the knowledgeable hierarchy of priests and ministers. Jesus' words resonate with us because they're true. God in us tells us that, not the Bible or the minister/priest.

Unconditional Love and Acceptance

The primary difference between the dogma of the Pauline Church and these teachings is embodied in the concepts of conditional and unconditional love. Pauline Christianity places rigid limitations on acceptance to the fold, which result in a broadening of the limitations by those in the Church with an agenda to exclude others. Depending on the social factors, various groups are accepted or rejected by the Church. Today, homosexuals, Jews, and atheists are the target groups most widely not accepted by the Church. In the recent past, it was rock stars, and before that women, the poor, psychics, free spirits, and people of colour.

Among Christian groups, other Christian groups are not tolerated. After Pope John Paul II's death, a Baptist church wrote in its newsletter, "Satan's minion here on Earth, the Pope, head of the largest cult in the world (Catholicism) is finally dead and back home with his father, Lucifer, in Hell." ("Satan Calls Another Pope to Hell," Landover Baptist Church, April 2005). Pope Benedict XVI returned the sentiment by declaring that Catholicism is the "one true church," meaning other Christians are pagans bound for hell (Address to

members of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith," reported by the National Catholic Reporter, January 31, 2008).

This intolerance comes from placing any conditions on love between God and man and man and man. God's love is unconditional love. There are no limitations; there are no conditions. That is the model for the love man should have for man; love without requirements or expectations.

Having any conditions on love—any conditions—results in the feeling that other conditions can be placed on love. Unconditional love means just that—without conditions! Conditional love teaches the person loved that the love can be withdrawn at any time. It teaches her that she isn't lovable without constraints, that some unknown conditions may be given at any time. And it teaches people, especially children, that we can impose rules on those who will receive our love and we have the right to withhold love if the person doesn't do what we require. That is not unconditional love.

Conditional love leads to judgments and intolerance based on any criteria prominent in the religious group at the time. Unconditional love permits no judgment and intolerance under any conditions. Any teaching that includes some conditions for love and acceptance allows the followers to broaden the intolerance to anything currently unacceptable to them. It teaches them that conditions on love are acceptable.

On the other hand, any teaching that includes unconditional love accepts no intolerance in any form. It teaches people how to be tolerant in all areas.

Jesus taught unconditional love and acceptance without requirements and expectations. Even the Pharisees knew he not only taught that--he **lived** it. They were so sure he would accept without conditions that they set up a scene that Jesus probably had not been involved in before, with an adulteress about to be stoned, knowing he would accept her unconditionally as he must have demonstrated repeatedly, to all, that he would accept anyone unconditionally, without exception.

Jesus said if you follow me, you must love unconditionally: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

I'm not sure why his followers today don't recognize the central, clearest, most often repeated teaching in his ministry. The Christian churches, throughout history and today, are full of condemnation, bigotry, hate, and intolerance, all in the name of Jesus.

The Next 2,000 Years

And so, it may be true that these alternative teachings, which I believe to be at the core of Jesus' teachings, will guide our culture during the next 2,000 years as they have not during the previous 2,000 years. An acceptance of these teachings separated from the Pauline biases and listening to our own sense about the Truth from God within us, will help us as a species evolve into a loving, compassionate, tolerant race that will erase the cruelty, violence, and hate that dominate our culture today.

It will require a rediscovery of the God within us, and of the teachings of Jesus and the other great teachers. But foremost, it will require that the Church lose its grip on people's spiritual lives.

Jesus predicted both the corruption of his teachings and the reemergence of them. Read the predictions by [clicking here](#).

A Convergence of Facilitating Factors

We may be experiencing an unprecedented spiritual awakening during our time that was intended to happen in this way. The spiritual evolution of our species may be progressing toward that ideal world that reflects Jesus' teachings in our time as it was meant to happen. A number of forces are converging that will encourage the development of a culture based on Jesus' teachings, the wisdom of the other Great Teachers, and foremost, the guidance of God who is One with us.

James' Church in Jerusalem died as the Pauline Church grew to influence the entire world. Today, the Pauline interpretations of Jesus' teachings are widely accepted, perhaps because of the rigidity of the Pauline interpretations of Jesus's teachings, single-minded evangelism, and intolerance of alternative interpretations of the Nature of God. It may be true that this widespread acceptance of the Pauline interpretation of Jesus will make it easier for people to accept the alternative view of Jesus and Jesus's teachings today. The world may have needed that single-minded evangelism to be prepared for the alternative teachings of Jesus.

At the same time, mass communication, especially the Internet, has made it possible for us to share understanding and experiences as it has never been possible in the history of mankind. Understanding the loving, compassionate, tolerant Nature of God will be easier for large numbers of people who will influence the culture more quickly and powerfully.

The mass media also are showing people the Greater Reality in ways that could not have happened prior to this time. Clairvoyance, remote viewing, mediumship, were all seen as oddities because they were isolated and few people experienced them. Now, millions view television shows about miracles and watch John Edward communicate with the spirits of people who have crossed over. Thousands experience remote viewing on the Internet. As a result, there is more widespread acceptance of the Greater Reality and personal access to universal knowledge, independent of the Church. It is calling into question the teachings of a Church that are intolerant of a personal approach to God.

And at the same time, the Internet encourages understanding and communication about the Nature of God and mankind. The Church is not able to remain the sole authority. Information is accessible to all people, and alternative interpretations of the Truth are more easily accessible. Another convergent influence is that evolution into a mobile, separated society where the extended family does not exist and individuals feel isolated from one another is providing an impetus for understanding and embracing the Oneness that overlays our individuality. The physical world seems to be forcing people apart; people are yearning for connectedness.

Finally, political mandates have created an environment that permits people to share alternative views of religion, God, and even Jesus, without fear they will be burned at the stake. It will be possible for messages about the Church and alternative views of Jesus to be openly discussed in the mass media as they could not have been discussed prior to the 18th century.

As a result of these forces, it may be the time in the history of mankind for the alternative interpretation of Jesus' teaching and the wisdom of the other Great Teachers to provide people with a spiritual underpinning allowing them to become more tolerant, compassionate, loving, and knowledgeable about God by approaching God individually, from within. The next 2,000 years of mankind's spiritual growth may result in a tolerant, compassionate, loving society that we can only dream about today.

It may have been meant to happen in this way.

Prophecy in the Pauline Letters

(With quotations of prominent Biblical Scholars)

The purpose of this study is to focus on the major prophecies in the epistles of Paul. These nine prophetic themes include the Apostasy, the Rapture, the Day of the Lord, the unveiling of the Antichrist, the Judgment of Believers, the Second Coming of Christ, the restoration of Israel, the Last Judgment, and the Eternal State. This paper will cover the most important prophecies in Paul's epistles. I am presenting them in the order in which they will occur, more or less, in the unfolding of Bible prophecy.

The Intermediate State

I have placed the intermediate state first because it is the prophetic event that Christians face next, if they should die before the Rapture. Paul speaks of the intermediate state when he says:

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8).

At death, the Christian goes immediately into the presence of God in Heaven, "absent from the body present with the Lord." This is the opposite of being in our bodies on earth, and absent from the Lord, as he tells us in verse six:

"Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:6).

When the Christian dies, or is raptured, he goes at once into Heaven - into the intermediate state. Paul also speaks of this in Philippians:

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23-24).

When he would "depart" in death he would "be with Christ." Physical death does not involve the loss of consciousness. The soul and body are separated, and the soul goes at once into the presence of Christ. The body and soul will not be reunited until the Rapture. Those who go directly to Heaven at death or the Rapture have been redeemed and justified by faith in Christ:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

The souls of the unconverted go immediately to Hell (Luke 16:19-26), where they are kept until the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Heaven is neglected nearly as much as Hell in American preaching today. The immediate nature of both Heaven and Hell should constantly be brought before people's minds from the pulpit. Worldliness results from preaching which does not focus on eternal things. Few if any real conversions will occur in a church where Heaven and Hell are not among the pastor's constant themes.

The Apostasy

In II Thessalonians, Paul gives the term, "a falling away" (II Thessalonians 2:3). The Greek word that this phrase translates is *he apostasa*, "the apostasy."

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first [*he apostasa* - the apostasy], and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (II Thessalonians 2:3).

Dr. W. A. Criswell gives this comment:

The composite word [the apostasy] literally means a "standing away from." The implication is that before "the day of the Lord" there will occur a marked falling away of professed believers. The use of the article indicates that Paul has in mind a specific apostasy (*Criswell Study Bible*, note on II Thessalonians 2:3).

Dr. Charles C. Ryrie¹ comments:

¹ **Charles Caldwell Ryrie** (born March 2, 1925) is a Christian writer and theologian who served as professor of systematic theology and dean of doctoral studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and as president and professor at what is now Cairn University. He is the editor of *The Ryrie Study Bible* by Moody Publishers, containing more than 10,000 of Dr. Ryrie's explanatory notes. First published in 1978, it has sold more than 2 million copies.^[1] He is a notable advocate of premillennial dispensationalism.

The apostasy. An aggressive and climactic revolt against God which will prepare the way for the appearance of the man of sin (*Ryrie Study Bible*, note on II Thessalonians 2:3).

II Thessalonians 2:3 tells us that the apostasy comes "first," before the man of sin (the Antichrist) is revealed, which seems to indicate that the full apostasy will culminate under the Antichrist in the Tribulation period, but that it begins "first," before the man of sin is revealed. This position gives a prophetic explanation for the churches becoming increasingly apostate since Charles G. Finney introduced doctrines and practices in the nineteenth century which resulted in millions of unconverted people flooding into the churches by the end of the twentieth century (cf. R. L. Hymers², Jr., Christopher Cagan, *Today's Apostasy*, Hearthstone Publishing, Ltd., 1999).

Dave Hunt points out that the main religious deception of the last days comes from professing Christians:

Christ is not referring [in Matthew 24:4-5,11,24] to this worldwide deception coming from rival religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam. *The "false Christs and false prophets" are professing Christians* Paul's final warning to Timothy leaves no doubt that the Church at Christ's return will have been corrupted through rejection of sound doctrine both by the many false prophets and those who love their ways and encourage and support them (Dave Hunt, *Tim LaHaye*³ *Prophecy Study Bible*, AMG Publishers, 2000, p. 1303. Hereafter referred to as *The Prophecy Study Bible*).

Some have felt that the words "falling away" should be translated "departure," and refer to the physical departure of Christians from the world at the Rapture. The more popular view is that the words "falling away" refer to the end-time apostasy, and are connected to the period of the Antichrist's reign. "The

² **Robert L. Hymers, Jr.**, is a conservative Baptist pastor noted for his evangelistic sermons and for his emphasis on classical Protestant conversion. He is the founding pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles. In the 1980s he drew media attention for his demonstrations against abortion, during which he led prayers for the death of pro-choice Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, which he later regretted and retracted, and for demonstrations against the movie, "The Last Temptation of Christ." He is the author of several books on conversion, apologetics and theological subjects.

³ **Timothy F. "Tim" LaHaye** (born April 27, 1926) is an American evangelical Christian minister, author, and speaker. He is best known for the *Left Behind* series of apocalyptic fiction, which he co-wrote with Jerry B. Jenkins. He has written over 50 books, both fiction and non-fiction.

important truth here is 'that day,' the Glorious Appearing, will not occur until the 'son of perdition' has been revealed" (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on II Thessalonians 2:3).

II Thessalonians 2:7 is another important verse:

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrains] will let [restrain], until he be taken out of the way" (II Thessalonians 2:7).

This verse indicates that God will restrain, or hold back, the "mystery of iniquity" until He stops restraining it. This does not mean that God is gone, because He is omnipresent. It simply means that God's restraint of iniquity ceases during the Tribulation period. At that time, God will no longer hold back lawlessness and sin. God will continue to work in the conversion of sinners, so that a remnant of Israel (Revelation 7:4-8) and "a great multitude" of Gentiles will be saved (Revelation 7:9-17).

I Timothy 4:1-2 speaks of demonic influence behind the end-time apostasy:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:1-2).

The term "last days" in Hebrews 1:2 refers to the entire Christian dispensation. But the term "latter times" in I Timothy 4:1 is restricted to the end of the current age. These two verses should be understood according to the context. "This passage characterizes the way things will be during the last days of the Church Age, an apt description of the times in which we currently live" (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on I Timothy 4:1-2).

The Holy Spirit expressly (explicitly) makes a point in this passage of warning against apostasy in the end-times. "Depart from the faith." The word "depart" comes from the Greek word for "apostatize." It refers to a move away from the original position. The false teachings of the latter times have their root in the activity of demons. These false teachings are then promoted through those who speak "lies in hypocrisy," whose consciences have been "seared with a hot iron." The consciences of those who "speak lies" "becomes distorted 'seared with a hot

iron' and, therefore, insensitive to the things of God" (*Criswell⁴ Study Bible*, note on I Timothy 4:2).

Another key Pauline passage regarding the apostasy of the last days occurs in II Timothy 3:1-13,

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Timothy 3:1-13).

The Prophecy Study Bible gives this note on the passage:

Since phrases like "latter days," "latter times" are used in different contexts they may refer to differing time periods, depending on their contexts. "Last days" in this context refers to the end of the current Church Age. The perilous times that Paul speaks of do not refer to the behaviour in the world, since the world in many regards has always been this way. Instead, Paul speaks of these characteristics that have infiltrated into the Church from the world. This is one of the major New Testament passages that teach a spreading apostasy throughout the Church in the Last Days. Paul's instruction regarding apostate

⁴ **Wallie Amos Criswell** (December 19, 1909 – January 10, 2002), was an American pastor, author, and a two-term elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1968 to 1970. Supporters have described him as one of the 20th century's greatest expository preachers and the patriarch of the "Conservative Resurgence" within the SBC.

people is to "turn away," which means to disregard and disassociate with them (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on II Timothy 3:1-9).

The "last days" in verse one refers to the end of the Christian dispensation. "*Perilous* times" is from a Greek word used only one other time in the New Testament - regarding the Gadarene demoniac! Matthew 8:28 says that the demon possessed man was "exceeding fierce." The Greek word is number 5467 in *Strong's Concordance*, and means, "dangerous, furious, fierce, perilous," according to the concordance. The note in *The Prophecy Study Bible* tells us that this characteristic has "*infiltrated into the Church*" (ibid.). Thus, this passage of Scripture predicts many church members becoming "dangerous, furious, and fierce" in the last days.

A list of the traits of these church members is given in verses two through four. They are said to have "a form" (i.e. the outward form) of godliness, but not the true experience. They are compared to Jannes and Jambres, "the magicians in Pharaoh's court who, through the power of Satan, duplicated to a point the miracles that God did through Moses and Aaron" (Dave Hunt, *The Prophecy Study Bible*, p. 1303). The point of the illustration is this: these Egyptians resisted the truth, and so will the apostate church members of the last days. The godly will suffer persecution as these evil church members grow worse and worse "deceiving, and being deceived" (v. 13).

gives an exposition of II Timothy 3:1-5,

"Perilous" is *chalepos*, literally, "hard times" The word speaks of the difficult, dangerous times in which Christians, living just before the Rapture, will encounter. "Shall come" is *enistēmi*, "to set in." "Men" is *anthrōpos*, the generic, racial term referring, not to male individuals only, but to the race, mankind. "Lovers of their own selves" is *philautos*, made up of *phileō*, "to be fond of," and *autos*, "self," thus, "fond of self." The word *agapaō*, referring to the love produced in the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit, is not used here. It is *phileō*, which speaks of a fondness, a liking, an affection. "Covetous" is *philarguros*, made up of *phileō*, "to be fond of," and *arguros*, "silver," thus "fond of money." "Boasters" is *alazōn*, its root, the same as that of *ale*, "wandering," its meaning, "an empty pretender, a boaster, a swaggerer." "Proud" is *hyperēphanos*, "to show above," thus, speaks of one who shows himself to be above other people. Vincent⁵ defines it by the word "haughty." "Blasphemous"

⁵ **Marvin Richardson Vincent** (Poughkeepsie, New York, 11 September 1834, and died in Forest Hills, New York, 18 August 1922) was a Presbyterian minister, best known for his *Word Studies in the New Testament*. From 1888, he was professor of New Testament exegesis

is *blasphēmos*, "speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful, reviling, railing, abusive." "Without natural affection" is *astorgos*. This is the Greek word denoting natural affection, with Alpha, which when prefixed to a word negates its meaning. The word is *stergō*. It is the love of parents for children, and children for parents, of husband for wife, and wife for husband. This is the binding factor by which any natural or social unit is held together. "Trucebreakers" is *aspondos*. The word is made up of *spondē*, "a libation," which is a kind of sacrifice, and which accompanied the making of treaties and compacts. The Alpha prefixed, negates the word, and it means "refusing to enter into a treaty, irreconcilable, implacable." "False accusers" is *diabolos*, the word used for the devil, literally, "slanderers." "Incontinent" is *akratēs*. *Kratos* means "power," and with Alpha privative means "without power," thus "without power over one's self," thus "without self-control." "Fierce" is *anēmeros*, "not tame; savage, fierce." "Despisers of those that are good," is *aphilagathos*, literally "not fond of that which is good." "Traitors" is *prodotēs*, "a betrayer or traitor." "Heady" is *propetēs*, from *pro*, "before" and *piptō*, "to fall," thus, "falling forwards, headlong: precipitous." It describes a person who is reckless, headstrong. "Highminded" is *tuphoō*, "to raise a smoke, to wrap in a mist." It is used metaphorically, "to make proud, puff up with pride, render insolent." The participle here is perfect in tense, and speaks of a person who in the past has come to a state of such pride, and is so puffed up, that his mind as a permanent result is beclouded and besotted with pride. "Lovers of pleasure, lovers of God"; the word is *phileō*, "to be fond of." "Form" is *morphōsis*. "Here, the mere outward resemblance, as distinguished from the essential reality." "Godliness" is *eusebia*, not "godlikeness," but "reverence, respect, piety toward God." "Power" is *dunamis*, "power" in the sense of that which overcomes resistance. It is used in Rom. 1:16 of the power of God which results in salvation. Here it refers to that same power which those who only have an outward semblance of piety toward God and not the inward reality, refuse to allow access to their lives that they might be saved (Kenneth S. Wuest⁶, *Wuest's Word Studies From the*

and criticism at Union Theological Seminary, New York City. Vincent graduated from Columbia University in 1851, taught in the Columbia Grammar School, was professor of classics in the Troy Methodist University from 1858 to 1862; then acting pastor of the Pacific Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Brooklyn from 1862 to 1863; and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Troy, New York, from 1863 to 1873. Then at Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, a small Victorian Gothic church at 310 East 42nd Street

⁶ **Kenneth Samuel Wuest** (1893 – 1962) was a noted Christian New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-Twentieth century. He is sometimes referred to as *Dr.* Kenneth Wuest, though it is unclear (at this writing) if this title refers to an earned Ph.D.

Greek New Testament, The Pastoral Epistles, William B. Eerdmans, 1975 reprint, pp. 143-145).

II Timothy 4:2-4 gives further information regarding the end-time apostasy.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:2-4).

Dr. Marvin R. Vincent in his *Word Studies of the New Testament*, volume IV, pp. 320-321, gives this comment:

[They] shall invite teachers *en masse*. In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and mere curious speculation in matters of religion, teachers of all kinds swarm like the flies in Egypt. The demand creates the supply. The hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If the people desire a calf to worship, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found. Clement of Alexandria describes certain teachers as "scratching and tickling, in no human way, the ears of those who eagerly desire to be scratched." Seneca says: "Some come to hear, not to learn, just as we go to the theatre, for pleasure, to delight our ears with the speaking or the voice of the plays."

This has certainly become true in our day. **Preaching**, which contains reproof, rebuke, and exhortation (II Timothy 4:2) is replaced by **teaching**, designed to accommodate "itching ears" (II Timothy 4:3); proclamation is displaced by instruction. Note the two different Greek words, one for preaching (*kērussō* - to proclaim) and the other for teaching (*didaskalō* - to instruct). Preaching is replaced by mere teaching as the age draws to a close. They will "turn away

Wuest was a professor of New Testament Greek at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and published over a dozen books on the New Testament. Wuest is often cited as an influential Evangelical and Dispensationalist scholar. Wuest is credited as one of the translators of the original New American Standard Bible (NASB). He later went on to produce his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text. In his translation of the New Testament, Wuest attempts to make the original Greek more accessible to the lay reader by drawing out (in translation) the full variety of possible meanings and translations of the underlying Greek words.

their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (i.e. myths). They will "turn to many different teachers of novelty and untruth" (*Ryrie Study Bible*, note on II Timothy 4:3-4).

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is spoken of over thirty times in the Old Testament. The first mention of it in the New Testament, other than Peter's quotation of Joel 2:31 in Acts 2:20, is given by Paul in I Thessalonians 5:2-6,

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:2-6).

The phrase "Day of the Lord" does not refer to a single day, "but a period of time filled with many prophetic events. The context must be considered to determine what time or event is considered. This verserefers to the Tribulation and end-time events that lead up to the physical coming of Christ" (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on I Thessalonians 5:2).

The Day of the Lord comes "as a thief in the night" (v. 2), that is, suddenly and unexpectedly. When the Rapture of true Christians occurs (I Thessalonians 4:16-17), the Day of the Lord begins with the events of the seven-year Tribulation. Dr. McGee⁷ comments:

"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." It is going to be a big surprise to the world. They are not going to expect it. I believe that the "big lie," which is in the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians, is the promise of peace and safety. The Lord Jesus warned of that: "Take heed that no man deceive you." The world expects to enter a great era of peace, the Millennium, but they will find themselves plunged into the Great Tribulation, which will include the greatest war the world has ever seen. It will come upon

⁷ **John Vernon McGee, Th.D., LL.D.**, (June 17, 1904 – December 1, 1988) was an ordained Presbyterian minister (PCUS) and later became the pastor of a non-denominational church, a Bible teacher, theologian, and was also a radio minister.

them suddenly, like a thief in the night (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, volume V, page 400).

The Rapture of true Christians ushers in the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Great Tribulation begins directly after the Rapture, and is the first event in this period, which Paul refers to, in I Thessalonians 5:2, as "the day of the Lord." "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (I Thessalonians 5:4).

It will not overtake true Christians as a thief because they will not be here. Christians will have already been "caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" at the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:17).

So, the Rapture is the first event. This is followed by the Great Tribulation, spoken of by Christ.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

Other events in the Day of the Lord include:

- (1) The return of the Lord in glory; (2) the destruction of the Beast and his host and the false prophet; (3) the judgment of the nations; (4) the thousand years, i.e. the kingdom-age; (5) the Satanic revolt and its end; (6) the second resurrection and final judgment; and (7) the earth purged with fire (*Scofield Study Bible*⁸, note on Revelation 19:19).

The Unveiling of the Antichrist

Paul refers to "the man of sin" in his exposition on the rule of the Antichrist, in II Thessalonians, chapter two. The term "antichrist" is not Pauline, but comes from John's first epistle:

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that *antichrist shall come*, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18).

⁸ **Cyrus Ingerson Scofield** (August 19, 1843 – July 24, 1921) was an American theologian, minister, and writer whose best-selling annotated Bible popularized futurism and dispensationalism among fundamentalist Christians.

John tells us that there are many antichrists, many who oppose Christ, but he also speaks in this verse of "antichrist that shall come." Paul refers to this same personage as "the man of sin," in II Thessalonians 2:3:

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:1-12).

"By our gathering together unto him" (v. 1) refers to the Rapture (cf. I Thessalonians 4:15-17). Verse two indicates that the Rapture has not occurred yet. Regarding verse three, Dr. McGee tells us that:

The Day of the Lord shall not come except there be the fulfilling of two conditions: (1) "There come a falling away first" and (2) "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Both of these things must take place before the Day of the Lord can begin, and neither one of them has taken place as yet (J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, ibid., p. 413).

In verse four we are told that the man of sin (the Antichrist) will sit "in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This is a prophetic reference to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Antichrist will go into the Temple and "demand that he be worshipped as God" (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on II Thessalonians 2:4).

Verses six and seven tell us that God will no longer restrain the "mystery of iniquity"; lawlessness and sin will no longer be held back by God. When the restraint of God is removed, "then shall that Wicked be revealed" (verse eight). Verses nine and ten describe the Satanic "signs and lying wonders" that the Antichrist will perform as he deceives the unbelieving world during the Tribulation period. God Himself will "send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." During the Great Tribulation many will be saved (Revelation 14:1-13; 7:9), but "they will not constitute the majority of those living at that time" (*The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on II Thessalonians 2:10). "The level of satanic influence in the Tribulation period will mark it as a very deceptive period of time" (ibid., note on II Thessalonians 2:9).

The Judgment of Believers

Paul speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ several times. In Romans 14:10-12, he says:

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10-12).

Christians ought to be more concerned with avoiding sins themselves than with judging other Christians. Verse eleven contains a question from Isaiah 45:23, and then Paul draws from that quotation the conclusion that every Christian must face the Judgment Seat of Christ to "give account of himself to God" (verse 12).

Paul also speaks of the Judgment Seat of Christ in I Corinthians, chapter three,

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

In this description of the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul tells us that the wood, hay and stubble (good works done from a wrong motive) will be burned at the Judgment Seat. The person whose works are thus consumed will be saved from Hell, but will have no rewards in the Kingdom. Matthew 25:14-23 and Luke 19:11-28 are commentaries on I Corinthians 3:11-15. Concerning the passage in Matthew 25 *The Prophecy Study Bible* says:

Not all are expected to produce the same results, but all are to be faithful with what they have. The phrase "after a long time" gives a veiled indication of the length of Christ's session in heaven during the present age. Each of those producing results is commended by the Master and promised that he will be a "ruler over many things," with a view to continued service in the Millennial Kingdom (note on Matthew 25:14-23).

The wicked and slothful servant, described in verses 23-28, who is cast into outer darkness, in verse 30, is "not a true disciple of the Master" (ibid., note on Matthew 25:26-30).

The Prophecy Study Bible gives the following comments on Luke 19:11-28,

These verses demonstrate that a believer's performance during the absence of the King will determine one's position and responsibility when the kingdom does arrive at the return of Jesus (note on Luke 19:16-28).

Thus, Luke 19:11-28 and Matthew 25:14-23 should be read as an explanation of, and commentary on, the Judgment Seat of Christ, as given in I Corinthians 3:11-15.

In II Corinthians 5:10, Paul says:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

All Christians will give an account of how they lived at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Dr. J. Vernon McGee makes this comment:

This is the judgment seat, literally, the bema. There is still a bema in Corinth, and when we were there on tour, we took pictures of the ruins of it. This was the place where the judges of the city would meet the citizens and would judge them for certain things - there was no question of life or death. At the judgment seat of Christ only believers will appear. The judgment is to see whether you are

going to get a reward or not The question He will ask is how we used these bodies. How did we live down here? (*Thru the Bible*, volume V, page 109).

The Second Coming of Christ

Dr. John F. Walvoord⁹ said:

The second coming of Christ is not only a dominant theme of the Old Testament but is also pervasive throughout the New Testament. It has been estimated that one out of every twenty-five verses in the New Testament is a reference either to the rapture of the church or the second coming of Christ and his reign over the earth (John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, 1991, p. 368).

The Apostle Paul speaks of the Second Coming of Christ several times. These are listed in chronological order, as they appear in his writings.

First, Paul mentions the Second Coming in connection with the Lord's Supper:

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Lord's Supper is a memorial to Christ's death "till he come."

Next, Paul tells us that death will be destroyed at the Second Coming:

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under

⁹ **John F. Walvoord** (May 1, 1910 – December 20, 2002) was a Christian theologian, pastor, and president of Dallas Theological Seminary from 1952 to 1986. He was the author of over 30 books, focusing primarily on eschatology and theology including *The Rapture Question*, and was co-editor of *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* with Roy B. Zuck. He earned AB and DD degrees from Wheaton College, an AM degree from Texas Christian University in philosophy, a ThB, ThM, and ThD in Systematic Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a LittD from Liberty Baptist Seminary.

his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:24-28).

Charles Ryrie points out that "The order of resurrections is as follows: first, Christ's; then that of believers, at His coming (I Thessalonians 4:13-18); and finally, the resurrection at the end of the millennial kingdom" (*Ryrie Study Bible*, note on I Corinthians 15:23-24). This passage does not discuss the Rapture, but describes the resurrection at the Second Coming (ref. *The Prophecy Study Bible*, note on I Corinthians 15:23-27).

Paul speaks on Christ's appearing as King of Kings in the sixth chapter of I Timothy:

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen" (I Timothy 6:12-16).

The word "potentate" in verse fifteen is a translation of the Greek word for "sovereignty" (Fritz Rienecker¹⁰, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1980, p. 635). Christ's sovereignty is displayed in His Second Coming as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:15). This title is also used of Christ in Revelation 17:14.

The power and might of Jesus at His Second Coming is also described by Paul in II Thessalonians:

¹⁰ **Fritz Rienecker** (* 27. Mai 1897 in Streckau; † 15. August 1965 in Neumünster) war evangelischer Publizist, Pfarrer und Theologe. Der von ihm begründete mehrbändige Bibelkommentar *Wuppertaler Studienbibel* sowie das *Lexikon zur Bibel* fanden weite Verbreitung.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (II Thessalonians 1:7-10).

"Everlasting destruction" does not mean annihilation. After this event they will be judged and cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:11-15).

The Restoration of Israel

Paul speaks extensively on the restoration of Israel in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans. Here are some of the key verses:

"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved" (Romans 9:27).

Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22 and applies it to the remnant of Jews who would believe in Jesus in the future.

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness" (Romans 9:30-31).

The Prophecy Study Bible says:

This is not a replacement of Israel by the predominantly Gentile Church, but rather the formation of a new body of believers consisting of Jews and Gentiles, a mystery foreseen and planned by God from the foundation of the world (Ephesians 3:3-11). No specific promises to Israel have ever been abrogated, but must and will be fulfilled during the Millennial Kingdom (***The Prophecy Study Bible***, note on Romans 9:30-31).

In chapter ten of Romans, verses one through four, Paul speaks of his desire for the salvation of Israel, who had rejected the righteousness of Christ and sought to establish their own righteousness:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:1-4).

The Prophecy Study Bible says this:

The apostle's expression of affection here is very strong, as he points out again that attempting to establish one's own righteousness, as did the Jew, meant the Jew had not submitted to the righteousness of God, which came only through Jesus (***The Prophecy Study Bible***, note on Romans 10:1).

Paul continued by saying that God had not completely rejected Israel:

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:1-5).

The Prophecy Study Bible says:

In spite of Israel's disobedience, God has not absolutely thrust them away from Himself, nor has He nullified His covenants with them (note on Romans 11:1).

In Old Testament times of deep spiritual apostasy in Israel, a remnant always remained loyal to Jehovah. During the first century, the remnant of Jews accepting the Messiah spread the gospel to the Gentiles. In the future Tribulation, after the Rapture, a remnant of Messianic Jews will preach the gospel (***The Prophecy Study Bible***, note on Romans 11:5)

In Romans 11:12, Paul writes of the restoration of Israel:

"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Romans 11:12).

The Prophecy Study Bible says:

If the diminishing of Israel through unbelief had the blessed result of bringing the gospel and salvation to the Gentiles, how much more blessed will the future be, when Israel becomes a nation of believers and worshipers of Jesus the Messiah (***The Prophecy Study Bible***, note on Romans 11:12).

Paul writes that one day all Israel shall be saved:

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

The Prophecy Study Bible says:

This deliverance is twofold, indicating rescue from the Gentile armies of the Antichrist and spiritual conversion, when the new covenant is established with His people (Jeremiah 31:33-34) (note on Romans 11:26).

In verse twenty-nine, Paul writes:

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

The Prophecy Study Bible says:

God's sovereign election of Israel is unchangeable and irrevocable. Nowhere in Scripture is the elimination of Israel as His earthly chosen people ever expressed or implied. Israel's promised destiny is as certain as the promises of God; the promises to Israel will be experienced by Israel (note on Romans 11:29).

The Last Judgment

Paul speaks of God's judgment in general in Romans 2:1-16. This passage speaks of principles that will be operative both at the judgment of believers and the Last Judgment.

The great New Testament passage on the Last Judgment is Revelation 20:11-15. The Last Judgment is the judgment of unsaved lost people, whose sins will be read out of "the books," whose names are not recorded in "the book of life." They will be cast into the Lake of Fire after the Last Judgment.

Paul speaks of this event several times in his epistles, particularly in II Timothy 4:1,

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (II Timothy 4:1).

The Eternal State

Paul speaks of the Eternal State in Romans, chapter eight:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:18-23).

This promise will begin to be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. The ultimate and complete fulfilment will happen after the Millennium and the Last Judgment, in the Eternal State. Dr. W. A. Criswell comments:

"Creature" is properly translated as "creation." When Adam fell, the entire cosmos suffered the results of sin (Genesis 3:17-18). Primitive domesticity among the animals was lost, and decadence became apparent in every aspect of the universe. All of this creation of God groans and travails awaiting the day when it, too, shall be delivered from the bondage of its corruption into the liberty of the children of God (*Criswell Study Bible*, note on Romans 8:21-22).

Paul speaks of the Eternal State in these beautiful and meaningful words, quoted from Isaiah 64:4,

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9).

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Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Introduction

Contrasts in Galatians

Chapters 1-2 Personal

Lost in Adam
All die physically in Adam
Another (false) gospel
Man's reasoning

Saved in Christ
All live spiritually in Christ
The genuine gospel
God's revelation

Chapters 3-4 Doctrinal

Law
Works
The curse of death
Condemnation by works
Servants in bondage (defeat)
The old covenant
(symbolized by Hagar)

Grace
Faith
The blessing of life
Justification by faith
Sons in freedom (victory)
The new covenant
(symbolized by Sarah)

Chapters 5-6 Practical

Living in the flesh
Works of the flesh
Falling from grace
World or self the object of glorying

Walking in the Spirit
Fruit of the Spirit
Standing firm in grace
The cross the sole object of glorying

Overview and Theme

Paul's defence of the true Gospel in this letter provides some of the clearest statements about grace found anywhere in the Bible. Romans may be Paul's most detailed treatment of the subject but Galatians was his strongest. Paul minced no words in condemning trust in self-righteousness. He skipped most of the customary politeness of an introduction and got right to the point with a stinging curse placed on anyone who would dare to preach a gospel other than the one the Galatians had already received (Galatians 1:8-9).

Paul was very disturbed that the Galatians had been seduced (Ga 3:1) from their faith in Christ through a perversion of the Gospel (Galatians 1:7). They had been told that faith in Christ alone wasn't enough for salvation; they had to keep the precepts of the Old Testament Law, specifically the rite of circumcision. He wrote to turn them back to a pure faith in Christ alone for salvation.

Paul revealed that trusting in anything other than Christ alone for salvation voids the death of Christ (Galatians 2:21). He also said in Galatians 5:4 that the work of Christ can be made of no effect unto those who are trusting in their own keeping of the Law in order to produce justification. They are fallen from grace.

Aside from the obvious purpose of this letter--to bring the Galatians back to a pure faith in Christ--Paul gave some personal information about himself and his beginnings in ministry that is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture (Galatians 1:13-2:21).

The theme expressed in this, one of the preeminent letters from the hand of the Apostle Paul dealing with the doctrines of salvation and sanctification, may be best expressed by the phrase, *by faith alone in Christ alone*. After the Gospel of **John**, a Christian, be he young or old, can do no better than to read and study the book of **Galatians**. Why, you ask? Because since time began there have been but two avenues known to man governing his approach to and relationship with God. There has been God's way and there has been man's way. One rests solely upon the *principle of faith*, the other on the *principle of self-effort or works*. One is valid and efficacious while the other one is both counterfeit and rubbish. It's really that simple. The problem lies in the fact that man is inclined, encouraged by his basic (sin) nature and all resident (to this world) satanic forces, to choose his way and ignore God's way. This applies to both the lost and the saved alike.

The Apostle Paul, deeply concerned with those who had become believers during his missionary journeys throughout the province of Rome called Galatia and who had subsequently been led astray by certain Judaizers, submitted this stern and impassioned letter that in many ways paralleled his letter to the believers in Rome, which outlined clearly and dramatically that a person may only be saved ("born again," "born from above" or "spiritually born") and subsequently sanctified (spiritual growth) by *faith alone in Christ alone*.

This epistle is a "declaration of emancipation" from legalism of any type. It is interesting to note that legalists do not spend much time with Galatians. It is a rebuke to them. This was Martin Luther's favorite epistle. He said, "This is 'my' epistle. I am wedded to it." It was on the

masthead of the Reformation. It has been called the Magna Carta of the early church. It is the manifesto of Christian liberty, the impregnable citadel, and a veritable Gibraltar against any attack on the heart of the gospel. As someone put it, "Immortal victory is set upon its brow."

This is the epistle that moved John Wesley. . . John Wesley went out to begin a revival—preaching from this Epistle to the Galatians—that saved England from revolution and brought multitudes to a saving knowledge of Christ. . . .

Galatians is the strongest declaration and defense of the doctrine of "justification by faith" in or out of Scripture. It is God's polemic on behalf of the most vital truth of the Christian faith against any attack. Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith plus nothing, but the saved sinner lives by grace. Grace is a way "to" life and a way "of" life. These two go together, by the way.

(Thru the Bible commentary by J. Vernon McGee)

The Pauline authorship of this letter has never been seriously questioned. Both *external evidence* (Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria all attribute it to him) and *internal evidence* (personal reference **1:1** and **5:2**, as well as the remark near the end in **6:11**) attest to this. Although there is disagreement as to the date of its writing, this letter was probably penned around A.D. 48, before Paul attended the Jerusalem Council where the issue of circumcision for Gentile Christians was decided.

Location

Many English-speaking and French people are of Celtic origin—that is, Scottish, Irish, Welsh or Breton. Their ancestors came from a place called "Galatia," which was an area in Asia Minor, now known as Turkey. "Galatia," "Celt," and "Gaul" are all related words. Around 278 B.C. a large number of Gauls left their home in southern Europe and settled in northern Asia Minor and their state eventually became known as Galatia. Around 25 B.C. their territory became a Roman province. *Geographically* the term "Galatia" was used for the north and *politically* it was used for the south—the Roman province of Galatia.

Northern Galatia was primarily pastoral with few developments and roads. Southern Galatia was well developed with flourishing cities and a road system. It was southern Galatia's highway along which Asiatic monarchs kept up their communication with the western coast of Asia Minor. It was the primary

highway between Syrian Antioch and Ephesus, on which Greek civilization flowed eastward. Numerous Jewish and Greek colonies were established along this route.

Many notable Biblical scholars now agree that Paul traveled in southern Galatia during his first missionary journey during which he visited Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (**Acts 13:1-14:28**). It is believed that Paul went through northern Galatia on his second missionary journey (**Acts 15:36-18:22**) after passing through southern Galatia. On his third missionary journey Paul visited the disciples in northern Galatia that had been converted on his second journey (**Acts 18:23**). It is noteworthy that in the book of **Acts** Luke uses the word *disciples* rather than the word *churches* in connection with this visit. The implication is that the Galatian churches were in southern Galatia and that there were only scattered disciples in northern Galatia.

Dr. Henry Clarence Thiessen, B.D., Ph.D., D.D., who was chairman of the Department of Bible, Theology and Philosophy at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, an authoritative evangelical scholar and author of *Introduction to the New Testament*, presents compelling data that indicates that Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian churches in southern Galatia.

Addressees

The churches of southern Galatia were established not by providential circumstance, i.e., by refugees during their flight from persecution resulting from their faith (**Acts 8:1-4**), but by the deliberate and organized practice of Paul during his purposeful missionary journeys along the principal roads of the Roman Empire. They were the result of a purely missionary enterprise.

The religion of the Gentiles in the South Galatian cities was more oriental than Greek. Its degraded type of sensuous worship could hardly satisfy the conscience even of a heathen community to which the influence of western civilization had come. Greek philosophy and Roman morality created a nobler idea of human duty and divine government than could be reconciled with the popular religion. Thus all the better feelings of educated men and women were stirred to revolt against the degraded superstition of the masses.

Into this conflict of religious ideas, the Jewish synagogue entered. The Gentiles flocked to its higher and nobler conceptions. However, while they gave adherence to the exalted ethics of the synagogue, yet they would

have nothing to do with the sacrificial system which centred in the Jerusalem Temple. To Paul's preaching, they gave a cordial welcome.

In the synagogue at Antioch (Acts 13:14-43), the Jews heard the impotence of the law for salvation announced, and the Gentiles heard the offer of a salvation procured at the Cross and given in answer to faith in Christ alone. From that hour, both Jew and Gentile recognized in Paul the foremost champion of the Gentiles, and the most formidable adversary of Judaism, which latter had been set aside by God at the Cross, but which, under an apostate priesthood, was still being nominally observed.

Before this first missionary journey, the Christian churches had been predominately Jewish. The teachers were Jewish with an Old Testament background. While interpreting the Old Testament in a new light, they yet fixed their hopes on the future kingdom of a national Messiah. But now, the newly formed churches were predominately Gentile, and the Gentiles recognized the Lord Jesus, not as a world-Saviour. Thus, the Galatian Christians were not for the most part, the fickle-minded Gauls of North Galatia, but Greeks and Jews of flourishing cities situated on the highways of commerce and government.

(Galatians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader, by Kenneth S. Wuest, Professor of New Testament Greek, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Illinois)

Judaizers

Judaizers represent that element within the Church (Body of Christ) from then until now who refuse to accept that salvation and sanctification of man is based solely on the love and grace of God by ***faith alone in Christ alone***. They do this by insisting that self-effort must be a part of any effort to achieve the approbation (approval) of God and any pathway to eternal and/or temporal spiritual life. A Judaizer simply cannot believe that salvation is strictly a matter of God reaching down to man in grace with the free-gift of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the cross of Calvary. To the Judaizers man must participate and help God in the "salvation plan," thereby denying the sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His efficacious work at Calvary. Specifically in the case before the Galatians there were Judaizers who insisted that non-Jewish believers must adhere to Jewish law and tradition, particularly the Law of Moses with emphasis on circumcision, in order to be fully justified before God.

The root of the Judaizer teaching is found in **Genesis 3:7** whereby man in his feeble and inadequate self-effort attempted to cover his shame and nakedness with plant material, only to discover that his fallen state could only be covered by God's effort of providing him a covering which employed the shedding of innocent blood (**Genesis 3:21**) and which portended the future sacrifice of the Son of God on Calvary's cross. The Judaizers model is even better illustrated by the historical and factual account of Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Eve, in **Genesis 4**.

Kenneth S. Wuest, Teacher Emeritus of New Testament Greek of The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, in his exposition entitled "Galatians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader" accurately exposed the Judaizer tendency as it relates to Cain and Able—the expose follows.

Adam had instructed his sons, Cain and Abel, as to the proper approach of a sinner to a holy God, namely, by means of a blood sacrifice which pointed to and symbolized the actual sacrifice for sin which God would some day set forth, even the Lord Jesus. However, the offering of such a blood sacrifice in itself would not result in the salvation of the offerer. That offering was to be only an outward visible manifestation of an inward fact, namely, the act of that offerer in placing his faith in the coming virgin-born child who would crush the head of the serpent, Satan. Without that act of faith, the offering of the sacrifice would be a mere form, and a mockery in the eyes of God.

Cain's reaction to this instruction was that he rejected the teaching of salvation through faith in a substitutionary sacrifice, and substituted for it his own personal merit and good works. Abel followed the instructions of his father, his faith leaped the centuries to the Cross, and he was declared righteous. Since the time of these two men, these two diametrically opposed tendencies are seen in the human race. We see them in the history of Israel. There always was the remnant in Israel, a little group which offered the symbolic sacrifices as an indication of a real living faith in the future substitutionary sacrifice, and there was always the larger group, which, while it went through the ritual of the Levitical sacrifices, yet exercised no heart faith to appropriate a salvation offered in grace on the basis of justice satisfied by the atonement, but depended upon personal merit and good works for salvation. . . .

From this latter group came two attacks against New Testament truth, inspired by Satan, two attempts of the Adversary to destroy the newly-formed Christian Church. One of these was the attempt to substitute good

works for faith in Christ. This was met by the letter to the Galatians. The other was the attempt to invalidate the atoning worth of the Cross by urging the Jewish wing of the Church to return to the Levitical ritual of the Temple. This was met by the Book of Hebrews. The first was aimed at the Gentile wing of the Church, the second, at the Jewish group in the Church. The Judaizers were members of this unsaved group in Israel, seeking to maintain a corrupt form of the Jewish national religion as against the Christian Church which had been formed at Pentecost.

The Judaizers mutilated the message of the gospel by substituting works for grace. They emphasized certain human attainments and merits, such as circumcision and being a member of the nation Israel, in addition to keeping the Mosaic Law and the achievement of ecclesiastical positions within the religious system. Judaizers were a constant problem during the days of the early Church, as seen not only within the book of **Galatians**, but also in **Acts 15:1**, **Romans 2:17-3:8; 9:30-10:3; Philippians 3:2-6**; and various others passages within the New Testament. They constantly endeavoured to destroy the work of the Apostle Paul, because he was the chief exponent of grace and he was the “Apostle to the Gentiles.” They attempted to nullify Paul (1) by depreciating his apostolic position, by setting up the Twelve Apostles as the “real interpreters” of Christ in order to discredit Paul’s authority as a teacher of grace; and (2) by substituting a salvation-by-works system for the doctrine of pure grace *by faith alone in Christ alone*—which was what Paul preached.

Outline

This letter to the Galatians may roughly be divided into three sections. First, there are the *personal* comments from Paul in chapters **1** and **2**. Second, there is the *doctrinal* portion in chapters **3** and **4**. Finally, there are the *practical* applications found in chapters **5** and **6**. A proper understanding of this letter from the hand of Paul will solidify a believer’s understanding of God’s one and only plan of salvation (including sanctification) for all mankind, which is totally of grace **by faith alone in Christ alone**.

Galatians Summary

Paul was so concerned that the Galatians were already turning from grace to works so soon after he had planted that church; that it was turning into another gospel (1:6). They were perverting the gospel so badly that Paul addresses the problems of trying to gain salvation through works in several different areas:

The first thing Paul did was to vindicate the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone. To gain salvation by the Mosaic Law meant that Christ died for nothing. Even the Holy Spirit came as a free gift to the church at Galatia. The Holy Spirit and Jesus' death were both unmerited by works.

He kept reminding them that the works of the Law cannot help sanctify a believer nor was it of any help toward their ongoing sanctification. Even miracles are not a result of law keeping but by divine power alone and unmerited.

Another way was to remind them of Abraham's example of faith and not of works of the Law. Abraham had saving faith long before any Mosaic Law ever existed. Saving faith is a provision of God and not of man. Besides the Law brought a curse upon any who could not keep it and no human could ever keep it perfectly. Only Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law in a perfect way. The idea that human performance could help acquire salvation was shattered in the Old Testament (Tanakh) and only served to condemn men and that throwing themselves upon the mercy of God in faith was the only means possible.

Another way that Paul mentioned was that Christ's work is the only work that can save a person and no person's own work can ever save them since our best efforts are like filthy rags before a holy God. The curse of the Law brought death but Christ became a curse for our sake. The curse was borne by Christ instead of believers or in place of the believers.

Another way Paul tried to make the Galatians understand this point was to understand the purpose of the Law. The Law would never be permanent since it was intended to serve the people only until the Promised Messiah (the Seed) would come. The Law was never intended to bring eternal life or an eternal promise in faith. Even the old sacrifices could never permanently leave the people free from the penalty of sin. The Law held captive all the world and only Christ and faith in Him could set the believer free from this curse. The Law was intended to be the schoolmaster and disciplinarian until Christ could justify us by His sacrifice and by faith. If they want to start keeping the Mosaic Law they would have to keep the whole Law which is associated with its curse if kept imperfectly. Paul asks them if salvation is by grace or by works? If it is works, Paul tells them clearly that they've fallen from grace

Finally our incorporation into God's family came after we were children and grown up into Christ and baptized into Him. When we reached this relationship, being clothed in Christ, we had the full standing of being justified before the Father and we were then incorporated into His family. If we are believers in

Christ, God sees us as Abraham's seed (3:29). Abraham's faith was a saving faith. Abraham's faith came before the Law was established. Legalism and grace do not mix. The cross put an end to the Old Covenant works and the obligatory rituals, washings, and sacrifices so it made no sense to keep pursuing righteousness through works of the Law.

There are no shortages of churches and Christians today that say "we don't do that, we don't do this, we don't do such and such" but one evangelist said there is another group of people that are just like that; they are in the cemetery.

Galatians Key Verses

Galatians 1:6-9 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!"

Galatians 2:16 "know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

Galatians 3:7 "Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham."

Galatians 3:29 "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Galatians 5:4 "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace."

Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Galatians 6:1-2 "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:7-8 “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”



Paul told the Galatians of his experience at Dasmascus

Galatians Commentary

Galatians, chapter 1

(From the King James Version 1611¹¹)

1: Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

2: And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

¹¹ **King James Version (1611)**

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3: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
4: Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:
5: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
6: I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
7: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.
8: But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
9: As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
10: For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.
11: But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.
12: For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
13: For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
14: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.
15: But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,
16: To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:
17: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.
18: Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.
19: But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.
20: Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.
21: Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
22: And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:
23: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
24: And they glorified God in me.

Chapter 1

1:1-9. Salutation and Theme

Verses 1-5. The Greeting

Galatians 1:1

The opening word “Paul” leaves no doubt about sender’s identity. In style and subject matter, the letter to the Galatians reflects the apostle’s style in his other letters.

The Roman name “Paul,” meaning “little,” may have been his name from childhood. It was common for Jews in the first century CE to have both a Hebrew name and a Greek or Roman name. The Jewish name “Saul” had the proud distinction of having been the name of Israel’s first king, also of the tribe of Benjamin. Instead of using the name “Saul,” however, the apostle may have chosen to use his Roman name in view of his ministry to the non-Jews, identifying himself with them.

“Apostle” designates one who is sent forth and is in the service of the sender. The Greek word *apóstolos* is drawn from the verb *apostéllo*, meaning “to send forth” or “to dispatch.” Ancient Greek historians employed the term *apóstolos* to denote “messenger,” “ambassador,” or “envoy.” The sole occurrence of the term in the Septuagint is at 1 Kings 14:6 in the text of Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century CE. It there applies to the prophet Ahijah as a messenger of God.

Paul’s apostleship was not of human origin. His detractors, who were subverting the faith of the Galatians, evidently implied that his rank was lower than that of the apostles who had walked with Jesus Christ and had been chosen by him. When undermining Paul’s authority, these opponents may have represented him as being merely an apostle of the Antioch congregation—one who did not meet the qualification of having assembled with the other disciples from the time of Jesus’ baptism by John until the day of the ascension. (Acts 1:21, 22; 13:1, 2) Because the faith of the Galatians had been adversely affected, Paul emphasized that his apostleship was “not from men,” or by their appointment, “nor through a man,” that is, through the agency of any man. While God-fearing Ananias baptized Paul, he was not the agent through whom Paul received an apostleship. Paul had already been chosen, for the Lord Jesus Christ revealed this to Ananias when sending him to meet the former persecutor. (Acts 9:15, 16)

To introduce the true source of his apostleship, Paul used *allá* (“but”), a strong indicator of contrast. His appointment came “through Jesus Christ,” God’s Son,

and the head of the Christian congregation. The resurrected, glorified Son of God revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus. Therefore, Paul was not a second-rate apostle, merely one sent out by the Antioch congregation. He was commissioned to be an apostle by the risen Lord, the one to whom “all authority in heaven and on earth” had been granted. (Matthew 28:18; Acts 9:3-6, 10-16; 22:12-16; 26:13-20)

Furthermore, the apostleship was through “God the Father,” the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and of all who are his children by reason of their faith in his Son. The relationship of the Son to the Father is that of perfect oneness. (John 17:20-22) Consequently, Paul rightly spoke of his assignment to an apostleship as also coming through God. The Father is the One who “raised [Christ] from the dead,” confirming Jesus Christ’s sonship. (Romans 1:4)

Galatians 1:2

By referring to “all the brothers” or the believers then with him, Paul showed that he was not alone in advocating the truth set forth in this letter. The brothers with him were in agreement with his words, adding persuasive power to what he was about to write. Nevertheless, in not mentioning any of them by name, the apostle may have been indicating that he was not dependent on certain ones to establish the correctness of his position. The truth of what he proclaimed was shared in common by all genuine disciples of Jesus Christ.

Paul directed his letter “to the congregations of Galatia.” The Greek word *ekklesía* denotes an “assembly,” a “gathering of people,” or a “congregation.” Groups of Christians were to be found in various parts of Galatia, a region in the central part of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were among the cities in the Roman province of Galatia where Paul had proclaimed the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. Likely only one copy of the letter was sent, with the intent that it be shared with the various groups of believers in Galatia. (Compare Colossians 4:16.)

Galatians 1:3

The prayerful words “favour [*cháris*] to you” expressed Paul’s earnest desire for the Galatian Christians to continue enjoying the grace, favour, or kindness of the Father and his Son. This would indicate divine blessing, help, guidance, and protection. Everything received from the Father and his Son is really a favour or a kindness—something unearned or unmerited. By reason of human sinfulness, no one is entitled to any of the gifts that the Most High showers abundantly on

all, even to the point of permitting the wicked to benefit from the sunshine and the rain. (Matthew 5:44, 45)

A Christian's enjoyment of an approved standing before the Father and his Son is a favour. This is extended to all who have faith in the atoning value of Jesus' shed blood. No one work, or a whole lifetime of works, could secure divine approval. In his kindness, however, the Father regards persons as righteous by reason of their faith or complete trust in him, his arrangement for salvation through his Son, and his "word," the revelation of his will and purpose. Furthermore, the help he gives to safeguard believers for eternal life is a marvellous expression of his favour. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Paul also wanted the Galatians to enjoy "peace" (*eiréne*). For believers to have peace involves more than an absence of conflict. Peace is an inner sense of security, a calmness of mind and heart that results from absolute confidence in God's love and care for his children and the never-failing aid that is available through his spirit. (Compare John 14:26, 27.) Because sin interferes with a person's having an approved standing before his Creator, God's forgiveness of sin on the basis of Jesus' shed blood is essential for the enjoyment of peace. (1 John 2:1, 2; 3:19-21) This peace, or sense of well-being from recognizing the deep love and concern the Father and his Son have for them, enables Christians to resist yielding to the desires of the sinful flesh and allowing themselves to be consumed by worry about daily needs. (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 21:34-36; Philippians 4:6, 7)

The apostle identified the favour and peace as coming "from God our Father," indicating that the Galatians were children of God. The interaction of God's word and spirit on the Galatians had effected a real change in their lives. Liberated from sin by reason of their faith in Jesus Christ, the Galatians had become God's free children. The godly manner in which they conducted themselves gave evidence that they were sons of God. Intense love for fellow believers in attitude, word and action confirmed that they had indeed experienced the new birth. (Compare John 8:31-44; 1 John 3:8-17.)

"Favour" or kindness and peace also come from "our Lord Jesus Christ." Believers acknowledge him as their "Lord," Master, or Owner because he purchased them with his own precious blood and is their Head, Bridegroom, and King. (1 Corinthians 7:23; Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:22-24; Colossians 1:13, 18-20; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4) The Lordship of Jesus Christ is superior to that of all men who have been called "lord." He is the "Lord of lords" whose authority extends over the angels and all humans, both living and dead. (Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:16)

Note: The reading “from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ” has the support of certain ancient manuscripts, including the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. It also appears elsewhere in Paul’s letters. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Philem. 3) The preponderance of manuscript evidence, though, attests the reading “from God [the] Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.” This includes P46 (from about 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and the Majority text (represented primarily by Byzantine manuscripts). Since the usual reading in other letters of Paul is “from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ,” it appears likely that copyists inadvertently wrote the more familiar form instead of “from God [the] Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 1:4

Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins,” surrendering his life willingly, not because of feeling compelled to do so by his Father. This voluntary act was an expression of Jesus’ superlative love for sinful mankind. (John 10:17, 18; 15:13; Philippians 2:5–8) When writing “our,” Paul was referring to believers, including himself, the brothers then with him, and the Christians in Galatia. The term “sin” (*hamartía*) is derived from the verb *hamartáno*, which in its basic sense means “to miss.” “Sin” is the missing or falling short of the mark of flawless uprightness in attitude, thought, word, and action. In giving “himself for sins,” Jesus Christ took upon himself such sins and the resulting penalty—death. Accordingly, he put himself in the place of sinners, dying sacrificially for their sins and thus making atonement. (Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 1:3; 9:26–28; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2; 4:10)

Jesus’ giving himself “for our sins” made possible a marvelous deliverance. Paul continued, “so that he might rescue us out of the present wicked age.” By accepting, in faith, that Jesus Christ gave himself for their sins, believers are cleansed from such and cease to belong to the present “age” (*aión*) that is characterized by badness and, therefore, divinely disapproved. It is an age that mirrors the spirit of its god, Satan, for the prevailing standards and practices are contrary to God’s will. (Ephesians 2:1–7) As persons delivered from or “taken out” of the present wicked age and so no longer under divine condemnation, believers belong to a different age, the age to come, an age characterized by righteousness.

The words “according to the will of our God and Father” may be directly linked to what Paul said about the rescue from the “present wicked age.” It is the “will” or desire of the God and Father of believers that humans cease to belong to the

present wicked age and be freed from a state of alienation with him. He made the provision for redeeming the human race by sending his own Son to the earth to die sacrificially. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:13–18) Paul’s words, “according to the will of our God and Father,” could also be understood to mean that, in keeping with the Father’s will, Jesus Christ made possible the deliverance from the “present wicked age” by giving himself “for our sins.” Whether viewed from the standpoint that Jesus Christ did his Father’s will or that the whole arrangement was an expression of the Father’s will, the sense is basically the same.

Because of having been reconciled to the Supreme Sovereign of the universe on the basis of Christ’s shed blood, believers can address him as their God and Father. This is the same manner in which Jesus Christ referred to the One who had raised him from the dead. (John 20:17)

Notes:

Various ancient manuscripts, including fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, a corrector’s change in fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, and P51 (from about 400), read *hypér* (“for,” “on behalf of,” “for the sake of,” “because of”) “our sins.” The original reading of Codex Sinaiticus, however, is *perí* (“concerning,” “with reference to,” “because of,” “on behalf of”). It is also the word found in many other manuscripts, including P46 (from about 200) and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. Since *hypér* and *perí* are very similar in meaning, it makes little difference in translation as to which word is the original one.

Manuscripts vary in the word order, the readings being “age of the present wicked” and “present age wicked.” This, however, does not affect the meaning of the expression and so has no bearing on translating the words.

Galatians 1:5

With reference to “our God and Father,” Paul made the prayerful expression, “to whom the glory into the ages of the ages. Amen.” Although there is no verb in the Greek, the Latin Vulgate reads, “is glory,” indicating that “glory,” magnificence, grandeur, or splendour belongs to God for all time to come. Many modern translations, though, represent Paul’s prayer to be that glory or praise be ascribed to God for all eternity.

The apostle deeply appreciated what the Father did in redeeming humans. This appears to have prompted his prayerful expression that the Father be recognized throughout the ages to come—age upon age—as the glorious One deserving to

be glorified or praised. The term “Amen” commonly concludes prayers and means “surely,” “truly,” “so be it.”

Verses 6-9. The gospel – true and false

Galatians 1:6

“I am amazed that you are so quickly departing from the One who called you in [Christ’s] favour.” The Greek word *thaumázo* means “to wonder,” “to marvel,” or to “be astonished,” “amazed,” or “surprised.” In this case, the amazement is coupled with disbelief. To Paul, it seemed incredible that such a development had occurred. He was dumbfounded that the Galatians, who had eagerly embraced the evangel, were being swayed by teaching that conflicted with the truth. The word “quickly” (*tachéos*) could either refer to the short time in which this happened or to the fact that the Galatians acted hastily and without careful thought or deliberation.

“Depart” is a rendering of the Greek term *metatíthemi*, which may also be defined as “turn away,” “abandon,” “desert,” “transfer,” or “remove.” The Galatians were turning away from the One who had called or chosen them—the Father. He had opened their hearts to embrace the message of salvation and drew them to himself to be his children. (John 6:44; Acts 16:14; 1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5) Accordingly, in abandoning or deserting the One who had called them, the Galatians were making a radical shift in loyalty. Since the Greek word *metatíthemi* is in the present tense, Paul apparently perceived this turning away by the Galatians as being in progress and, hence, as not yet completed.

The calling was “in favour” (*cháris*). This denotes that the Galatians either were (1) chosen to be in a state of favour or (2) called in the realm of favour. The tenor of Paul’s letter suggests that the preference should be given to the second meaning (“in the realm of favour”), the choosing being an expression of “favour,” kindness, or grace. This calling did not result from any works the Galatians had performed. They did not have any special merit so that they should have been so highly privileged. Rather, the choosing was totally unearned. It was made possible through Christ. The sole basis for gaining an approved standing before the Father proved to be faith in the atoning value of Christ’s shed blood. Hence, Jesus Christ is really the embodiment of “favour,” kindness or grace. (John 1:16, 17)

In view of Christ’s being intimately associated with God’s calling “in favour,” Paul may have written “Christ’s favour.” Ancient manuscript support for this, however, is not conclusive.

Although having been chosen “in” the element of favour, the Galatians were transferring “into” (*eis*) another sphere, one to which favour was foreign. Paul refers to this as “another evangel.” The word “evangel” is the anglicized form of the Greek *euangélion*, meaning “gospel,” “good news,” “glad tidings.” This “other evangel” stressed the necessity of observing the Mosaic law in order to gain full divine approval. Thus, this “other evangel” nullified the vital truth that faith in Jesus Christ was the sole basis for coming to enjoy the dignified status of God’s sons and all the associated rights and privileges.

Note: Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus of the fourth century and Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century support the reading “in favour of Christ,” as does the text of P51 (from about 400). While the text of P46 (from about 200) is not in a good state of preservation, the indications are that it says, “in favour,” with no reference to Christ. Three other variants found in ancient manuscripts are, “in favour of Jesus Christ,” “in favour of Christ Jesus,” and “in favour of God.”

Galatians 1:7

As to this “other evangel,” Paul added, “which is not another.” The true evangel focuses on Jesus Christ. It is “good news” or “glad tidings” about him and what he accomplished. This other message was a corruption, a perversion, or a twisting of Christian truth. There was nothing good or gladdening about it.

Regarding what was actually happening, Paul continued, “except certain ones are unsettling you and want to change the evangel of Christ. ”

Although the apostle may have known the “certain ones,” he did not mention them by name. This may be because he did not want to give them any recognition. (Compare the case of the relative who selfishly refused to take Ruth as a wife and, therefore, is not dignified by having his name preserved in the Scriptural record [Ruth 4:1–6].)

The Greek word for “unsettle” (*tarásso*) may also be defined as “stir up,” “disturb,” “throw into confusion,” “disquiet,” “perplex,” or “upset.” By insisting that circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic law were essential for divine approval, “certain ones” disturbed the peace that the Galatians had enjoyed upon embracing the “glad tidings of Christ.” (Compare Acts 15:1, 2, 5, 24.) The fact that Paul used the present tense when speaking about the troublemakers suggests that they were still active in the Galatian congregations.

These “certain ones” wanted to “change” the “evangel.” The Greek word for “change” (*metastrépho*) basically means to “change from one state to another.” This, however, was not a change for the better. It was a corruption, a distortion, or a perversion of the “evangel of Christ”—the good news about him and his vital place in God’s purpose. By advocating circumcision and strict compliance with the Mosaic law, the troublemakers were drawing attention away from Jesus’ unique role. “Salvation is in no one else.” His is the only name “by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) The “certain ones” were distorting the truth that faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and as the one whom the Father resurrected from the dead was the all-essential requirement for being divinely approved. Their message emphasized human effort as the prime means to attain a righteous standing, whereas, in truth, it is the “work of God” and an expression of his kindness or favour.

Galatians 1:8

Emphasizing the seriousness of any change in the evangel, the apostle said: “But even if we or an angel from heaven were to proclaim an evangel [to you] other than the evangel we proclaimed to you—cursed be he.”

Paul introduced his next statement with the words *allá kaí* (“but even”). As an indicator of strong contrast, *allá* serves to make a clear distinction between the “certain ones” and “we or an angel from heaven.” While *kaí* often means “and,” the context indicates that it here denotes “even.”

The “evangel” that Paul had declared while laboring in Galatia was the complete Christian message. It did not need any adjustments, or additions, but contained everything that was essential for being accounted as righteous from God’s standpoint. Hence, even if Paul or an angel were to proclaim a message that differed from the “glad tidings” that the apostle had declared to the Galatians, neither he nor such an angel should be given any attention. Because the term *ángelos* means “messenger,” the apostle added “from [*ex*, out of] heaven,” making it clear that he was referring to a heavenly messenger, an angel. The proclaimer of a different “good news” should come under a curse (*anáthema*, used in the Septuagint to denote something or someone “under divine ban” or “an accursed one or thing” [Lev. 27:28; Num. 21:3; Deut. 7:26; 13:16, 18; 20:17; Josh. 6:17, 18; 7:1, 11–13; 22:20; Zech. 14:11]). This would only be right, as such an “evangel” would be out of harmony with what Paul had received by direct revelation from the Father and his Son. (Although *pará* can mean “beyond” or “beside,” this expression here [as in verse 9] appears to have the sense of “other than,” “different from,” or “contrary to.”)

Since not even Paul nor an angel from the very heavens was to be believed in the event a different “evangel” was proclaimed by either one, the Galatians had even more reason to reject the teaching of those who were trying to tear down the apostle’s work—men whose credentials were far inferior to those of the apostle and an angel from heaven. The danger of listening to the supposed message of an angel when such contradicted a revelation from God is illustrated in the case of a prophet who lost his life because of doing so. (1 Kings 13:14–26)

Note: Manuscripts vary in their readings. The word “you” (*hymín*) does not appear in the original reading of the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus but was added by a corrector after the verb *euangelízetai*. Although the text is poorly preserved, P51 (from about 400) seems to have the word “you,” but it precedes the verb (as it does in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus).

Galatians 1:9

The apostle reemphasized the strong point he had made. “As we have said before, now, too, I say again, If someone proclaims to you an evangel other than the one you accepted—cursed be he.” The words “said before” could refer either to what Paul had earlier told the Galatians while laboring among them or what he had just stated in this letter. If referring to a previous occasion, the verb *proeirékamen* (“we have said before”) could be understood to mean what Paul and his associates had said to the Galatians. In view of Paul’s emphasis on his apostleship, however, it appears that the second person plural is an editorial “we,” agreeing with the “we” and corresponding plural verb in verse 8. Also, the apostle’s wonderment about developments among Galatian believers indicates that he, while with them, likely would not have used such strong language respecting another evangel. Therefore, his words about what had been said before probably relate to the similar statement previously made in this letter. Anyone attempting to proclaim a message that differed from the “glad tidings” that believers in Galatia had embraced was to be regarded as cursed by God, being under a sacred ban, or as one designated to be devoted to destruction.

Modern translations commonly render *pará* (*par*’), the preposition preceding *hó parelábeta* (which you received, which you accepted) as “other than” or “different from.” In its basic sense, *pará* signifies “beside” and, therefore, Paul’s words have also been understood to mean a message that “goes beyond” the evangel (Wuest). Earlier, however, the apostle had specifically stated that the message being proclaimed by the troublemakers was not “another” evangel (that is, no glad tidings at all). So it appears that he was here referring to a

proclamation of something that was “contrary to,” “different from,” or “other than” the true evangel rather than a mere addition thereto (1:7).

Notes:

The original reading of the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus is, “I have said before” (*proeíreka*), not “we have said before” (*proeirékamen*). The first person singular form appears to have been a copyist’s error or a deliberate alteration made in view of the expression “I say” (*légo*) that follows.

The reading *parelábeta* (literally “you received alongside”) is better attested than *elábeta* (“you received”), found in P51 (from about 400). As both Greek words, in this case, signify “you accepted,” the variation has no bearing on translation.

1:10-2:14. Paul’s true gospel – divine revelation

1:10-24. Proved by Paul’s early experiences and ministry

Galatians 1:10

“Now, indeed, am I trying to win over men or God?” The Greek term for “indeed” (*gár*) may also mean “in fact,” “certainly,” or “for.” Since Paul’s words are not presented as a reason for his previous statement, the apparent meaning of *gár* is “indeed.” The expression “win over” is one meaning for the Greek word *peítho*. Often this term has the sense of “persuade,” “conciliate,” or “convince.” In this context, however, the thought is that of “gaining approval or favourable recognition.”

If directly linked to Paul’s previous words, the question may be paraphrased as follows: “Does what I have just said sound as though I am trying to have men’s or God’s approval?” It may also be that Paul’s question served to answer the misrepresentation of the troublemakers, the Judaizers. They may have portrayed the apostle as advocating circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law when it suited his purpose and not doing so when non-Jews would have responded unfavourably. Possibly, to back up their contention, the Judaizers may have pointed to Paul’s circumcising Timothy. (Acts 16:3) In view of the strong language the apostle had used regarding proponents of a different “good news,” however, there should have been no doubt in the minds of the Galatians that his primary concern was to have God’s approval, not that of men.

Building on the previous question, the apostle raised yet another one that focused on men. “Or am I seeking to please men?” The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is, No. Paul was not attempting to please or to curry the favour of men, sacrificing truth so as to make the “good news” more acceptable to them.

Summing up his reason for not seeking human approval, Paul said: “If I were still pleasing men, I would not be Christ’s slave.”

An inordinate desire to please men makes one a slave to them. All words and actions are evaluated in the light of what others may think or feel, be they right or wrong. The individual who seeks to please men must be on constant guard that he does not give offense for any reason but does and says whatever wins him favour despite his having serious reservations. Since being a disciple of Christ requires that the Son be accorded superior love and the kind of obedience commensurate with his position as Lord, clearly the person whose aim is to have the favour of men cannot be a slave of Christ. Such a person’s efforts to please men would constitute a denial of Christ’s Lordship. (Matthew 10:37; Luke 6:46) Accordingly, as Christ’s slave or as one in the service of his Master, Paul could not, at the same time, be trying to please men. As a fanatic adherent to Jewish traditions, he evidently had been concerned about pleasing men. Upon becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, however, this ceased to be the case. Though he had once pleased the unbelieving Jews by his way of life and his violent opposition to Christ’s disciples, he incurred their wrath as a believer. He definitely was not “still pleasing men” as he once did.

Note: The Majority text (primarily Byzantine manuscripts) reads, “for [*gár*] if I were still pleasing men.” The word *gár*, however, is missing in P46 (from about 200) and the fourth-century manuscripts Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, as well as other ancient manuscripts. Accordingly, “for” is missing from modern translations. The inclusion or omission of “for,” though, is really immaterial to the meaning of Paul’s words.

Galatians 1:11

There was an aspect to which Paul desired the Galatians to give their attention. He introduced it with the words, “But I want you to know, brothers.” What Paul wanted the Galatians “to know,” to understand fully, or to be very clear on was the source of the “glad tidings” that he proclaimed. Even though they had permitted themselves to come under the baneful influence of false teachers, Paul did not treat them as enemies. He still called them his “brothers,” regarding them as fellow sons or children of God, and appealed to them on that basis.

The apostle continued, “the evangel which was proclaimed by me is not according to man.” In this case, the Greek term (*euangelízo*) for “proclaimed” or “preached” is a verb form of “evangel” and, therefore, means “preaching or proclaiming the good news.” The words “according to man” may be understood to mean “not of human origin” (NAB, NRSV, REB) or “not dependent on human authority.”

The opponents of Paul who were interfering with the spiritual growth of the Galatians by introducing a perversion of the “glad tidings” apparently tried to downgrade the apostle’s work. Judging from the language that Paul used in this letter, one may reasonably conclude that the false teachers (advocates of circumcision and observance of the Mosaic law for non-Jewish believers) made it appear that Paul was proclaiming a message that he received merely second-hand from the apostles who had been chosen by Jesus while he was on earth. The argument possibly was that Paul got his information from the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation and, therefore, was dependent on them for support and backing. By claiming *firsthand* knowledge of what the apostles at Jerusalem believed, the Judaizers could speak with authority and their utterances would carry weight with the Galatians. Getting to the heart of the matter, Paul disavowed any human dependence or influence respecting the “glad tidings” that he proclaimed.

Note: There is considerable support for the reading *dé* (but), the second word in the Greek text (including P46 from about 200); certain other ancient manuscripts read *gár* (for).

Galatians 1:12

Focusing on what could not be said about the evangel that he was proclaiming, the apostle continued, “for neither did I receive it from man nor was I taught [it].” It was not a matter of Paul’s receiving the whole deposit of Christian teaching from any man or any human source or agency. He was, therefore, not just passing on second-hand information, but he was able to speak with the kind of authority characteristic of one possessing firsthand testimony. Furthermore, Paul was not taught the evangel by any man or group of men. Therefore, he was not in a subordinate position to the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation by reason of having learned the “good news” through a course of instruction that was conducted or authorized by any of them.

“But,” as Paul said respecting the source for what he proclaimed, the evangel was “through revelation of Jesus Christ.” In this case, “but” is a rendering of

allá, a stronger indicator of contrast than the word *dé*, which also may be translated “but.” Like the apostles who were personally instructed by the Master, Paul received the “glad tidings” by “revelation” (*apokálypsis*, “uncovering,” “unveiling”) from Jesus Christ. The glorified Son of God appeared to him on the road leading to Damascus, and so the apostle could speak of having the evangel revealed, uncovered, or unveiled to him by Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Paul’s apostleship and teaching authority rested on the same solid basis as that of the “twelve.” The means by which the apostle had received the evangel was “through revelation,” and the source of that revelation was God’s Son, as indicated by the genitive construction, “revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Note: The reading *óúte*, “nor,” has superior manuscript support (including P46 from about 200) to that of *oudé*, “not even” (literally “not but”), “nor.”
Galatians 1:13

Further establishing why he could not have received the evangel from a human source, Paul pointed to his previous manner of conduct as a zealous practitioner of the Jewish religion. “For you have heard of my previous conduct in Judaism, that to an extreme I persecuted the congregation of God and devastated it.”

The apostle did not say from whom the Galatians had heard about his previous way of life. Perhaps the expression “you have heard” may be understood as meaning that what he had done was common knowledge and so could have been communicated to them by any of a number of believers. It is also possible that the apostle himself talked about his former life as a Pharisee, as he did when making his defence before Agrippa. Paul said: “My manner of life from youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem, is common knowledge among the Jews. They have known me for a long time and could testify, if they would, that I followed the strictest party in our religion and lived as a Pharisee” (Acts 26:4, 5, NJB). With unflagging zeal, he, as a Pharisee, directed his efforts against the “congregation of God,” the people who were the special property of the Most High. In referring to it as the “congregation of God,” Paul called attention to the seriousness of what he did. Engaged in a vicious campaign against those who belonged to the Almighty, he was a fighter against God.

The extent to which Paul relentlessly persecuted the “congregation of God” is described by the Greek expression *kath’ hyperbolén*, meaning “beyond measure,” “utterly,” “to an extreme,” or “to an excess.” In Greek, the verbs for “persecuted” (*dióko*) and “devastated” (*porthéo*) are in the imperfect tense, indicative of a continual action that was not completed in the past. Accordingly, Paul’s objective had been to continue persecuting disciples of God’s Son until the “congregation of God” was annihilated. Since the total annihilation,

destruction, or devastation of the congregation did not occur, however, a number of translations render *porthéo* as “tried to destroy” (NAB, NIV, REB) or “was trying to destroy” (NRSV).

Paul’s record as a persecutor is preserved in the book of Acts. He approved of the murder of the Christian disciple Stephen. (Acts 7:58–8:1) Thereafter he dragged believing men and women from their homes and saw to it that they were imprisoned. (Acts 8:3) Not content with his efforts against the followers of Christ in Jerusalem, Paul obtained authorization from the chief priests to bring believing Jews from Damascus to Jerusalem for punishment. (Acts 9:1, 2, 14, 21; 22:4, 5) Regarding his course as a persecutor, Paul, in his defense before Agrippa, said: “I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene. This I did in Jerusalem; I myself threw many of God’s holy people into prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were being sentenced to death I cast my vote against them. I often went round the synagogues inflicting penalties, trying in this way to force them to renounce their faith; my fury against them was so extreme that I even pursued them into foreign cities.” (Acts 26:9–11, NJB) In a hateful, arrogant manner, Paul fought against the “congregation of God.” (1 Timothy 1:13)

Paul’s reference to his past course provided additional proof that he could not possibly have received the evangel through any human agency. The great change from a rabid persecutor to a faithful, self-sacrificing disciple of Jesus Christ could not have been effected by any human persuasion.

Note: Instead of the usual *epóρθoun* (“devastated”), two ninth-century manuscripts read *epolémoun* (“fought”).

Galatians 1:14

Comparing himself to many others in his age group, Paul continued, “and I progressed in Judaism beyond many of the same age in my race, being much more zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” The Greek verb for “progress” or “advance” (*prokópto*) literally means “to strike before” or “to cut before” (*pró*, “before”; *kópto*, “cut”). Since this verb is in the imperfect tense, the thought is that Paul kept on or continued to make progress or advancement in Judaism. Among other young Jewish men of his age, Paul stood out prominently because of his fanatical devotion to the traditions to which the strictest sect of Judaism clung tenaciously. (Compare Matthew 15:1–6; Mark 7:6–13.)

It was not zeal for the law as set forth in the Scriptures that prompted Paul’s violent attacks on the disciples of Jesus Christ, but it was his superior regard for

human traditions—the rules and regulations formulated by the religious leaders of Judaism and transmitted from generation to generation. From his perspective, the disciples of Jesus Christ lived a life that was contrary to these cherished traditions. All who did not recognize the inestimable value of these traditions and observe them were, in his estimation, deserving of death. Paul had become thoroughly imbued with the Pharisaical spirit. This was a process that had started at the very beginning of his life, for he was “a son of Pharisees.” (Acts 23:6) When older, Paul had Gamaliel, the most notable Pharisee in Jerusalem, as his teacher. (Acts 22:3) In later times it was said of this highly esteemed man: “When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died.” (Mishnah, Sotah, 9.15) Even though Gamaliel does not appear to have been an extremist, his reasonable attitude seemingly did not influence Paul. Instead, Paul evidently was further confirmed in his unrestrained zeal for defending traditions at all costs.

Galatians 1:15

His dramatic encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ, however, produced a change in Paul that no human power could have accomplished. The apostle recognized this event as an expression of God’s kindness or favour, saying: “When, however, [it] pleased [God], who separated me from my mother’s womb and called [me] through his favour....” Although Paul had been a fighter against Him, the Most High was “pleased” or “delighted” to act in harmony with his sovereign will respecting the vicious persecutor. Paul’s reference to being separated from his mother’s womb could mean that he attributed his life outside the womb to the One who made human birth possible—God. The Greek term for “separated” (*aphorízo*), however, may also be defined as “set apart,” and this appears to be the apostle’s meaning. By reason of divine providence, factors that influenced Paul’s life from birth, including his training and experiences, prepared him for the time when he was confronted by the Son of God. It was at a time when Paul was at his worst, while on a mission to harm Christ’s disciples in Damascus, that it “pleased” God to call the persecutor. This was indeed a call “through favour.”

Note: Since the words *ho theós* (“the God”) are missing in P46 (from about 200), the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and other ancient manuscripts, there is a question as to whether they were in the original text. They are, however, found in the Majority text (mainly Byzantine manuscripts), the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus.

Galatians 1:16

Paul attributed the revelation of the Son to the Father, saying, “to reveal his Son in me.” Since the expression “in me” could denote that Paul was the instrument that God used to reveal his Son to others, the *Revised English Bible* conveys this thought with an expanded rendering of the text—“in and through me.” The apostle’s focus, though, had been on the source of the “glad tidings” that he proclaimed, and so it is unlikely that he meant “through me.” It appears preferable to regard “in me” as signifying “within me.” In his inmost self, Paul experienced a full revelation of the Son, and this revelation produced a radical change in his life. (Compare Matthew 16:16, 17.)

Commenting on the purpose respecting God’s revealing of the Son, Paul continues, “so that I might proclaim him among the nations.” The Greek term for “proclaim” (*euangelízo*) is the verb form of the word “evangel” and, therefore, means to proclaim or to preach the glad tidings or good news. The evangel is about Jesus Christ. Accordingly, Paul’s preaching of the evangel was to be a proclaiming of “him”—who Jesus is, what he has accomplished, and his vital role in God’s purpose. The primary realm of the apostle’s labours was to be in the midst of or among the non-Jewish nations.

Paul’s undertaking the commission to proclaim the glad tidings concerning Jesus Christ to the non-Jews proved that his apostleship could not have been of any human origin. Even the apostle Peter had considered it defiling to enter a Gentile home and, by means of a vision, was helped to see that it was acceptable for him to declare the evangel to the Roman centurion Cornelius. (Acts 10:10–29) Far greater would have been the aversion of a strict Pharisee, such as Paul had been prior to his conversion. (Compare Acts 11:2, 3.) From a human standpoint, the choice of Paul as an apostle to the nations would have been inconceivable.

Continuing to emphasize that he had received the evangel through revelation and apart from any human agency, Paul added, “I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.” The reference to “immediately” (*euthéos*) apparently is to be understood as pointing to what the apostle did not do upon receiving the “revelation of Jesus Christ.” Paul did not at once feel compelled to seek advice from any human—“flesh and blood.” In this context, the Greek term for “confer” (*prosanatíthēmai*) is understood to denote “consult with” or “ask advice of.” It literally signifies “to put or place” something before another for consideration (*prós*, “toward”; *aná*, “up”; *títhēmi*, “put” or “place”). While his detractors may have claimed that he received instruction from others, Paul stressed that he did not seek the guidance or advice of men about what he should do to carry out his commission.

Galatians 1:17

He did not even consult the apostles. Paul said, “Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those [who were] apostles before me.” Jerusalem is located about 2,500 feet above sea level and, hence, it was common to speak about “going up” to the city.

Jesus Christ had specifically commanded the apostles to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit. For some years thereafter, they appear to have made the city their home. (Acts 1:4; 8:1; 15:4–6)

Since Paul had received the glad tidings by direct revelation, he did not immediately head for Jerusalem to consult with those who already were apostles. By referring to them as apostles “before” him, Paul ranked his apostleship with theirs. It was only a matter of their having been apostles for a longer period of time.

Instead of quickly going to Jerusalem, Paul wrote, “but [*allá*, an indicator of strong contrast] I went to Arabia and again returned to Damascus.” Although the term “Arabia” could apply to any area in the Arabian Peninsula, it probably is to be understood, in this case, as designating the Syrian Desert to the east of Damascus. In view of the fact that no mention is made in the book of Acts about the apostle’s going to Arabia, it cannot be determined specifically when this occurred. Paul may simply be saying that, during his early days as a believer, Arabia was the only place to which he went outside of Damascus. He may first have spent some time in Damascus, making public expression of his faith in the synagogues there. Then, for an undisclosed reason, he may have gone to Arabia and afterward returned to Damascus, remaining there until his forced departure from the city.

It seems more likely, however, that Paul left Damascus immediately after his baptism, going to Arabia to meditate on what his taking up the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ would mean for him. Even God’s Son, after his baptism, spent 40 days in the wilderness of Judea before beginning his ministry. (Mark 1:9–13) In the event Paul headed for Arabia right after his conversion, his preaching in the synagogues of Damascus occurred upon his return to the city. (Acts 9:20–25)

Note: Although *anélthon* (I went up, I did go up) appears in printed editions of the Greek text, there is very ancient manuscript evidence for *apélthon* (I went, I did go).

Galatians 1:18

“Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days.” The fact that three years passed indicates that Paul was in no hurry to meet the apostles and that he did not consider it necessary to have their validation of his apostleship. This period of three years may either count from the time of Paul’s conversion or his return to Damascus after his stay in Arabia. Since the apostle provided no indication about when he departed from Arabia, likely the three years are to be counted from the time of his conversion. It was then, for the first time as a believer, that he “went up to Jerusalem.” “Three years” could mean either complete years or one full year preceded and followed by some months (parts of three years).

Cephas, the Semitic equivalent for the Greek name “Peter,” means “rock.” It was the name that Jesus Christ gave to Simon upon being introduced to him by Simon’s brother Andrew. The name evidently reflected Jesus’ confidence in Peter’s rocklike or firm conviction upon accepting him as the promised Messiah. (John 1:41, 42)

The Greek term for “visit” (*historéo*) is not found elsewhere in the Scriptures, not even in the Septuagint. Based on the way the term is used in other writings, it may be defined as “visiting with the objective of becoming acquainted with someone or something.” Since Paul’s purpose, as evident from his words to the Galatians, was not to learn something from Peter, apparently his visiting would have been to get acquainted with him.

The book of Acts reveals that Paul desired to associate with believers in Jerusalem, but found this difficult because they greatly feared him. It seemed inconceivable to them that this vicious persecutor could have become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Barnabas, though, came to Paul’s aid and apparently introduced him to Peter. Likely it was after this that Paul remained with Peter for fifteen days. Paul’s stay in Jerusalem, however, ended quickly, as Jews of the dispersion plotted to kill him. (Acts 9:26–30) Moreover, in a trance, he was given direction by Jesus Christ to leave the city. (Acts 22:17–21)

The short period of fifteen days was not enough for Paul to have been given extensive instruction by Cephas (Peter). Besides, during much of the time, Paul was boldly witnessing to others about Jesus. (Acts 9:28) His mentioning the specific number of days involved supported the argument that the evangel he proclaimed had not been taught him by any human agency.

Note: The most ancient manuscripts support the reading of the Semitic name “Cephas” instead of the Greek equivalent “Peter.”

Galatians 1:19

Paul did not see any other of the twelve apostles. He said: “But another of the apostles I did not see, except James the brother of the Lord.” This may be understood to mean that, besides Cephas, he did not see any other apostle. The only other disciple of note whom he did see was “James the brother of the Lord.” Since, though, Acts 9:27 reports that Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostles, the meaning probably is that the only apostles whom Paul saw were Cephas and James. In this case, James would be regarded as an apostle of the Jerusalem congregation.

This James is evidently the one to whom the people of Nazareth referred when saying about Jesus: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3, NRSV). As a prominent elder, James had an active part in making vital decisions that affected the growing Christian congregation. (Acts 12:17; 15:13–29; 16:4) He also wrote the letter bearing his name. (James 1:1) That he was widely known in the Christian community is apparent from the fact that Jude (Judas) introduces his letter with the words, “Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and brother of James.” (Jude 1:1, NAB)

Paul’s contact with James must have been even more limited than that with Cephas, as he did not stay in the home of James during the fifteen-day period. In view of Paul’s brief association with Cephas and James, no one could say that he had received the whole deposit of Christian teaching from the apostles.

Galatians 1:20

Emphasizing that he had not concealed anything, Paul added: “But what I am writing to you—Look! before God, I am not lying.” Up to this point, the apostle had written specifics, establishing that it would have been impossible for him to have received the evangel in any way other than revelation. To show that he was not hiding anything but was presenting matters truthfully, Paul made God his witness to the fact that what he wrote was no lie. It was the whole truth.

Galatians 1:21

Continuing with the presentation of his personal history, Paul said: “Then I went into the regions of Syria and of Cilicia.” Upon his hurried departure from

Jerusalem, Paul was conducted by fellow believers to the seaport of Caesarea. From there, he left for his hometown, Tarsus in Cilicia. (Acts 9:30) Later, based on reports about a growing number of non-Jewish believers in Antioch, the Jerusalem congregation sent Barnabas to this capital of Syria. Recognizing the need for a qualified companion to help him there, he located Paul in Tarsus. Both men then served together in Syrian Antioch. (Acts 11:22–26) Accordingly, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, he did go into the regions of Syria (an area north of Galilee) and of Cilicia (the narrow strip of land in the southeast corner of Asia Minor). Syria and Cilicia were neighbouring regions, separated by mountains.

Galatians 1:22

Regarding the congregations in Judea, Paul wrote: “But I was unknown by face to the congregations of Judea, those in Christ.” Believers in Judea did not know Paul “by face,” or personally, because circumstances prevented the apostle from making their acquaintance. In Jerusalem, great fear of him existed, as the disciples of Jesus Christ found it inconceivable that this one-time persecutor had indeed become a believer. Hence, initially, Paul’s efforts to associate with them proved to be fruitless. Not until Barnabas came to his aid was there a change. Soon afterward, though, Paul’s stay in Jerusalem was cut short because opposers sought an opportunity to kill him (Acts 9:26–30). So there really was insufficient time for the congregations in Judea to come to know him personally. Distinguishing these congregations from the Jewish synagogues in Judea, Paul referred to them as being “in Christ.” To be “in Christ” means to enjoy a oneness with him. Believers are themselves members of the body of Christ, united to him as head. (John 17:20–23; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:15, 16)

The apostle’s mentioning his being personally unknown to the believers in Judea contributed to his argument that he was not indebted to them for any help in coming to know the evangel. He, like the twelve, was taught the glad tidings by Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:23

Still, news about Paul did spread in the congregations of Judea. He continued: “But they only were hearing that the one who formerly persecuted us now is proclaiming the faith which he formerly devastated.” The Greek expression for “were hearing” (*akoúontes ésan*) indicates that there must have been successive reports about Paul’s activity as a believer. Doubtless news of the amazing change in the man who had spearheaded the persecution against them caused quite a sensation in the congregations of Judea. According to Paul’s words, these

believers recognized that the “faith” (that which is the object of faith) he proclaimed was the same one that he once tried to destroy. It was the faith in Christ as the sole basis for having sins forgiven and attaining the status of beloved sons or children of God, with all the attendant blessings. (Compare Peter’s words at Pentecost with those of Paul when preaching in Pisidian Antioch [Acts 2:29–39; 13:32–41].)

The Greek word *euangelízo*, often translated “proclaiming” or “preaching,” signifies “to proclaim the evangel.” It is the verb form of *euangelíon*, meaning “evangel,” “good news,” or “glad tidings.”

As in verse 13 (see comments on that verse), the verb for “devastate” (*porthéo*) is in the imperfect tense, indicative of a continued action. Thus, the very “faith” that he had again and again tried to destroy, Paul was then proclaiming as “good news.”

Galatians 1:24

Regarding the effect the change in him had on the congregations of Judea, Paul continued, “and they glorified God in me.” Unlike those who were trying to discredit Paul in the eyes of the Galatians, believers in Judea were moved to “glorify,” praise, extol or magnify God “in” him. Divine power had transformed Paul from a vicious persecutor and would-be destroyer of the congregations of God into a believer and zealous advocate of the evangel. So, as the apostle says, “in me,” or “in my case,” the congregations of Judea “glorified God,” the One who worked mightily within him. (Although the Greek preposition *en* (in) has been rendered “because of” and “for,” it appears preferable to preserve the meaning “in” and understand it to mean “in Paul’s case.” [Compare 1 Corinthians 4:6, Philippians 1:30, and 1 John 2:8 for this significance of *en*.]) Paul himself—what he had become and was doing—caused believers in Judea to extol the Most High.

In the apostle’s case, the prayer of the dying Stephen had been answered: “Do not hold this sin against them.” (Acts 7:60; REB) Believers in Judea acted in harmony with the forgiving spirit of this prayer. There was no harboring of ill-will toward the former persecutor for all the injury that he had caused. By their attitude toward the apostle and their heartfelt praise of God for the wondrous change that he had effected within their persecutor, the Judean believers acknowledged that Paul was proclaiming the “faith” that he had once so viciously opposed.

Thus, the apostle made it clear to the Galatians that the evangel he preached was the complete message of salvation. Though he had not received it from the apostles or anyone else associated with the congregations of Judea, the evangel he proclaimed was the same one that the apostles declared. Hence, the contention of the Judaizers was wrong. They had no basis for claiming that the evangel proclaimed by Paul was an incomplete or defective message, one that needed to be supplemented with the teaching that non-Jewish believers should be circumcised and submit to the requirements of the Mosaic law in order to enjoy the fullness of divine approval. (Compare Acts 15:1, 5; Galatians 5:1, 2, 10–12.)

Galatians, chapter 2

(From the King James Version 1611)

- 1: Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.
- 2: And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.
- 3: But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:
- 4: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:
- 5: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.
- 6: But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:
- 7: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;
- 8: (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)
- 9: And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.
- 10: Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.
- 11: But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12: For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13: And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14: But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

15: We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

16: Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17: But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18: For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21: I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Chapter 2

2:1-14. Proved by Paul's later experiences and ministry

Galatians 2:1

A literal translation of the first few words would be, "Then through fourteen years." The Greek preposition *diá* (through) is here usually translated "after," as the expression "through fourteen years" evidently is to be understood as signifying that this period had passed. (Compare Mark 2:1 and Acts 24:17, where *diá* also has the sense of "after.") Since there is no direct link to the apostle's earlier fifteen-day stay with Peter, likely the fourteen years are to be counted from the time of Paul's conversion.

The apostle continued: "I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking also Titus along." Based on the book of Acts, Barnabas accompanied Paul on two of his visits to Jerusalem. (See, however, the Notes section.)

The purpose of the first one of the two trips was to bring a contribution to Jerusalem for the believers who would be affected by the adversities of a foretold famine. It was the Antioch congregation that sent Barnabas and Paul with the collected funds. The fact that the Acts account mentions Barnabas first suggests that he, not Paul, had the prime responsibility in connection with this mission. (Acts 11:30) Nothing in the book of Acts suggests that Paul had in mind discussing the evangel that he proclaimed. In fact, there would have been no reason for him to give an account about his activity in Syrian Antioch. The Jerusalem congregation had sent Barnabas there and, at his request, Paul joined him. So the apostle would not have felt compelled to take Titus along for the purpose of making a test as to whether there would be any insistence on this believing non-Jew's being circumcised. It may also be noted that the Acts account does not mention that anyone else accompanied Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem. (Acts 11:29, 30)

Years earlier, the apostles had decided to devote themselves exclusively to the "ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2–4) It may well be, therefore, that other elders were responsible for overseeing the relief efforts. This would agree with what is reported in Acts 11:29, 30: "The disciples decided to send relief, each to contribute what he could afford, to the brothers living in Judaea. They did this and delivered their contributions to the elders through the agency of Barnabas and Saul." (NJB) Paul and Barnabas may simply have talked to the elders who accepted the donated funds.

There may not have been any opportunity for association with the apostles during the brief stay in Jerusalem. If, as considerable manuscript evidence might suggest (see the Notes section), the developments narrated in Acts 12:1-24 may have preceded the arrival of Paul and Barnabas. According to the Acts account, Herod Agrippa I had executed the apostle James, and Peter was miraculously delivered from prison, thwarting Agrippa's apparent plan to have him killed after the Passover. Therefore, the apostles may have chosen to stay away from Jerusalem until some time had passed after Agrippa's death. At least Peter must have lived elsewhere during all the time his life was in danger. He certainly would have exercised due caution. (Compare Matthew 2:13–15, 22, 23.)

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul would not have been misrepresenting matters by omitting any reference to the trip with Barnabas. The purpose of that trip really had no bearing on Paul's ministry to the nations and may well have involved no contact with the apostles.

What occasioned Paul's going to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion evidently was a situation that developed in Antioch upon his return with Barnabas following an extensive mission on Cyprus and in parts of Asia Minor.

Certain men from Judea, with no authorization from the Jerusalem congregation, stirred up no little trouble by insisting that circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law were essential for salvation. (Acts 15:1, 24) Because of this development, according to the book of Acts, “Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders.” (Acts 15:2, NRSV) Unlike the mission involving the relief effort, there is specific reference to the apostles and mention is made of others who accompanied Paul and Barnabas. Furthermore, the fact that Paul’s name precedes that of Barnabas suggests that the apostle was the most prominent in the discussions. Since an issue had arisen about uncircumcised Christians like Titus, it was most appropriate for Paul to take him along to Jerusalem.

Notes:

A twelfth-century manuscript reading of *tessáron* (four) is evidently a copyist’s error, as there is no support for it in any extant older Greek manuscripts.

The most ancient manuscript evidence supports the reading *pálin anében* (“again I went up”). This includes P46 (from about 200), the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. There is also evidence for the reading *anében pálin* (“I went up again”). The reading *pálin anélthon*, however, has limited support. As both *anében* and *anelthon* signify “I went up,” the variations in manuscripts are really insignificant.

There is uncertainty about the reading of Acts 12:25. Numerous manuscripts, including the fourth century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, read *eis Ierousalém* (into or to Jerusalem), suggesting that Paul and Barnabas made another trip to Jerusalem after completing their relief mission. This particular section of Acts is not preserved in any of the papyrus manuscripts dating from before the fourth century. Other later manuscript readings indicate that Paul and Barnabas returned from Jerusalem upon completing their assignment. Among the various ancient manuscript readings are the following: *ex Ierousalém* (out of Jerusalem), *apó Ierousalém* (from Jerusalem), *eis Antiocheian* (into or to Antioch), *ex Ierousalém eis Antiocheian* (out of Jerusalem into Antioch). According to these later manuscripts, the events narrated in Acts chapter 12 could have preceded the arrival and departure of Paul and Barnabas.

Galatians 2:2

While the Acts account indicates that the Antioch congregation sent Paul, Barnabas, and some others to Jerusalem, the apostle added a clarifying detail: “But I went up according to a revelation.” The Greek term *katá* (according to)

here has the sense of “in response to,” “in accord with,” or “as the result of.” Although the manner in which it was conveyed is not stated, this divine revelation (*apokálypsis*, “unveiling,” “uncovering”) doubtless was one of the many that the apostle received personally to guide and strengthen him in his service as an apostle to the nations. (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Paul knew that what he had taught Jews and non-Jews about salvation was correct and, therefore, had no reason to discuss the content of his preaching with the apostles. A divine revelation, however, indicated to Paul that it was then appropriate for him to do so. The apostle’s mentioning his going to Jerusalem “in response to a revelation” fitted his argument that he had not received the evangel from a human source and so was not inferior to any of the twelve apostles then living. He did not need their authorization or confirmatory response but always acted under divine guidance as the chosen apostle to the nations.

As to what he did at that time, Paul continued, “and I laid before them the evangel that I am preaching among the nations.” The Greek word *anatíthēmai* denotes “to lay before,” “to present,” or “to explain.” Paul set forth the substance of the glad tidings. Since the Greek verb for “preaching” (*kerysso*,) is in the present tense, this indicates that the apostle continued to proclaim the same evangel among the nations or the non-Jewish peoples. No change in the content of his preaching occurred after the trip to Jerusalem.

Apparently the ones designated by the pronoun “them” are identified by what the apostle added, “but in private to the noted ones.” The expression “noted ones” (*dokóúntes* [form of *dokéo*]; literally, “seeming ones”) signifies those who appeared to be something in the eyes of others—persons of repute or prominence. Later, Paul identified them by name—James, Cephas (Peter), and John (2:9). The words “in private” are a rendering of *kat’ idían*, literally meaning “according to own” and signifying “apart from others,” “alone,” or “privately.”

The book of Acts does not mention such a private meeting. This is understandable, as the writer Luke focused on the final resolution of the issue that had been raised concerning uncircumcised believers. That there must have been a discussion with those held in high esteem by the congregation is only logical. For there to have been a meeting of all the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation about a particular matter, those responsible for convening such a gathering needed to be approached.

Apparently at a private meeting, the apostle Paul, acting in harmony with a divine revelation, set forth the evangel he proclaimed among the non-Jewish peoples. The basic content of this evangel was that faith in Jesus Christ, the

unique Son whom the Father had raised from the dead, constituted the sole basis for salvation. Besides relating what he proclaimed, the apostle doubtless also must have mentioned how God had blessed his efforts and those of Barnabas and how, through them, many miracles had occurred among the uncircumcised Gentiles. (Compare Acts 15:4, 12.) Thus, it would have been made clear to all present that Paul was preaching the true evangel that he had received by revelation and that his firm stand not to impose circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law on non-Jewish believers had the backing of Holy Spirit.

Regarding the reason for the private discussion with those of repute, Paul continued, “not that somehow I might be running or had run in vain.” The apostle here refers to his tireless efforts or sustained exertions in declaring the evangel among the nations as “running.” He had thus “run” from the start of his conversion and continued doing so at the time he spoke to the prominent ones of the Jerusalem congregation. His apprehension was that all he had accomplished and continued to do in ministering to non-Jews might be “in vain,” or prove to be for nothing.

Since Paul had received the evangel “through revelation of Jesus Christ,” he had no doubts about the content of his preaching among the non-Jews. As evident from his other letters to believers, however, he was deeply concerned that all whom he aided to become disciples of Jesus Christ would continue to be such. If any were led astray, the diligent efforts that Paul expended in their behalf would have been for nothing. For example, when the apostle was forced to leave Thessalonica because of intense opposition, he was fearful about the effect persecution might have on the new believers. He wrote: “When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.” (1 Thessalonians 3:5, NIV)

Paul knew that advocating circumcision and observance of the Mosaic law as essentials for salvation constituted a perversion of the evangel. Hence, he was rightly apprehensive that a wrong decision respecting this could do untold spiritual harm. His experience with Jewish believers who had come to Antioch from Jerusalem forcefully demonstrated how persuasive they were. Even though he and Barnabas were personally present and set forth sound counterarguments, this did not resolve the issue. At least some members of the Antioch congregation apparently gave credence to the erroneous views propagated by Jewish believers from Judea.

Galatians 2:3

Paul continued: “But not even the Greek Titus, the one with me, was compelled to be circumcised.” By having the uncircumcised Titus accompany him to

Jerusalem, Paul likely had in mind using the example of this Greek brother as a test case. The fact that James, Peter, and John did not insist on the circumcision of Titus proved undeniably that they were in full agreement with the manner in which Paul discharged his responsibilities as an apostle to the nations.

In Greek, the word for “compel” (*anankázo*) signifies “to constrain,” “to drive to,” “to put under necessity,” “to force.” Such compelling could be accomplished by means of threats, persuasion, or entreaty. It could also be achieved by subtle pressure to gain group approval or acceptance. There was, however, no compelling of any kind in the case of Titus. Though uncircumcised, he was accorded full acceptance as a beloved brother. Both the indicator of strong contrast (*allá*, “but”) and the strong negative (*oudé*, “not even”) serve to emphasize that the “noted ones” neither said nor implied that Titus should get circumcised.

According to Paul’s other letters, Titus continued to be a close associate in subsequent years. At the apostle’s request, he ministered to Christians in Corinth, developing intense love for them on account of their commendable response to correction. Upon leaving the city and rejoining Paul in Macedonia, he returned to Corinth to complete the task of getting a contribution ready for the poor believers in Judea. (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6, 7, 13–15; 8:6, 16, 17, 23; 12:17, 18) During the final years of Paul’s life, Titus had the assignment of handling problems in congregations on the island of Crete. Thereafter Paul encouraged him to join him at Nicopolis, probably the city located on a peninsula in north-western Greece. (Titus 1:4, 5; 3:12) During the apostle’s second imprisonment and doubtless at his request or with his approval, Titus headed for Dalmatia. (2 Timothy 4:10)

Galatians 2:4

Despite the concurrence of James, Peter, and John that circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law were not to be imposed on non-Jewish believers, an element within the congregation opposed the correct position. Paul stated, “But because of the brought-in false brothers who came in to spy on our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to enslave us.” In view of the expression “false brothers,” the Greek adjective *pareísaktos* (brought in) has generally been understood in a sinister sense—“smuggled in” or “brought in quietly, secretly, or under false pretenses.”

Paul did not disclose who was responsible for bringing false brothers into the congregation. In view of Jesus’ parable or likeness about the weeds and the wheat, Satan evidently planted these sham believers among genuine Christians. (Matthew 13:24–30, 37–39) This would agree with what Paul said in his letter to the Thessalonians about Satan’s interfering with his efforts to strengthen fellow

believers. (1 Thessalonians 2:18) Similarly, out of great concern for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthian congregation, the apostle wrote: “I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:3, NIV)

The “false brothers” were those who maintained that salvation was dependent on circumcision and compliance with the Mosaic law. If permitted to go unchecked, they would have made Christianity but another sect of Judaism. In Jerusalem and Judea, the Mosaic law was binding on all Jews as a civil law. Therefore, the apostles and other genuine believers continued to observe the law, nonetheless recognizing that they could never attain salvation thereby. The false brothers, however, were still Pharisaical at heart, insisting that all persons must become Jews and live as such in order to be saved. (Compare Acts 15:5, 10, 11; 21:20–26.)

Because wrong motivations were involved, the verb *pareisérchomai*, defined as “come in,” here is commonly viewed as having the sense of “slip in,” or “sneak in.” The objective of the “false brothers” was to “spy on” the freedom genuine believers enjoyed. By reason of being “in Christ Jesus” or members of his body united to him as head, believing Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles freely associated with one another. Since fleshly distinctions no longer counted, genuine Jewish believers had no objection to entering the homes of their non-Jewish brothers and eating with them. These believing Jews no longer viewed non-Jews as unclean and close contact with them as defiling. (Compare Acts 10:28, 29; 11:2, 3.) The false brothers, however, spied on this marvelous freedom. They apparently made it their business to determine whether all the believers who associated freely with one another were really circumcised. On finding out that certain ones were not, these false brothers must have questioned the propriety of freely associating with uncircumcised Gentiles. (Compare Acts 11:2, 3.) In this way, they wished to destroy the unity that had come about between Jews and non-Jews on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ as God’s sole means for salvation.

Galatians 2:5

Respecting the false brothers, Paul wrote, “to whom not even for an hour did we yield in submission.” The false brothers evidently insisted that Titus be circumcised, but the apostle refused to give in to what they expected. Paul’s use of the first person plural verb *eíxamen* (“we did yield”; “we did give in”; “we did surrender” [preceded by the strong negative *oudé*, “not even”]) probably included Barnabas and Titus. While circumcision in itself was not wrong, insistence on it and on observance of the Mosaic law for gaining salvation was contrary to Christian teaching. There was no room for compromise in an effort

to preserve peace, but a firm stand had to be taken. In no way was Paul going to pacify the false brothers.

The apostle (evidently also Barnabas and Titus) did not waver. Not even for the briefest period—an hour—did he yield in submission (the dative *te hypotagé* [“to the submission, obedience, subordination, or subjection”] here evidently signifying “to the submission that was expected or demanded”). Paul did not succumb even momentarily to the pressure exerted by the false brothers and give some indication of perhaps submitting to what they advocated. (Compare Revelation 17:12 and 18:10, where “hour” designates a short period.)

Pointing to the noble, unselfish aspect for the unyielding stand, the apostle added, “in order that the truth of the evangel might remain with you.” The evangel is the truth, untainted by any falsehood, and the expression “the truth of the evangel” signifies the truth that is embodied in the glad tidings.

As a Jew, Paul would not personally have been affected by requirements that might be imposed on non-Jewish believers. He was not waging a personal battle. His firm stand was for the benefit of the Galatians and all other believing non-Jews. If the apostle had compromised with reference to Titus, the false brothers could have pointed to this as a precedent. This would have put into their hands a persuasive argument for their contention, especially since it would have appeared that all the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation agreed with them. As a consequence, circumcision and compliance with the Mosaic law could have been imposed on all uncircumcised believers, including those in Galatia. In that case, “the truth of the evangel” would not have “continued” or “remained” with them. The introduction of circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law as vital for salvation would have perverted the evangel, implying that faith in Jesus Christ was insufficient for gaining an approved standing with God. The false brothers were attacking the very foundation of Christian teaching. Any compromise with them for the sake of peace would have been destructive to the truth embodied in the evangel.

Note: The original reading of the sixth-century Codex Claromontanus does not include the words *hois oudé* (“to whom not even”). This is either a copyist’s error or a deliberate adjustment, as all other extant Greek manuscripts include the words. If a deliberate omission, the copyist may have felt that a correction was needed in view of Paul’s circumcising Timothy. (Acts 16:3)

Galatians 2:6

With reference to James, Cephas, and John, Paul wrote, “But from those who seemed to be something.” As in verse 2, the Greek word rendered “seemed” is a form of the term *dokéo*. In designating James, Cephas, and John as “those who

seemed to be something,” the apostle was not downgrading their significant place in the Christian congregation. Instead, he was emphasizing that they were highly regarded. These faithful brothers were men of repute. Certain members of the congregation, though, apparently viewed them as being more than they actually were.

Paul then interrupted the sentence. Two intervening parenthetical phrases follow before the apparent thought with which the apostle began is completed. From a strict grammatical standpoint, however, the sentence starting with “but from” remains incomplete. This appears to be indicative of the rapid flow of Paul’s thoughts—thoughts impelled by the depth and intensity of his feelings.

Regarding James, Cephas, and John, Paul added, “whatever they were formerly does not matter to me.” In the Jewish community, James, Cephas, and John never enjoyed the distinction Paul had. Cephas and John were fishermen, “uneducated and ordinary.” (Acts 4:13, NRSV) Though not illiterate, they had not received any rabbinical instruction (as had Paul). Cephas and John were reckoned as being among the common people. To believers, however, they had the distinction of having been in intimate association with God’s Son. In the eyes of many, this in itself made the apostles special. As for the disciple James, he was the “brother of the Lord.” Such a distinction would have been very impressive and must have filled many with a measure of awe. After the violent death of the apostle James (the brother of John), it seems that Jesus’ half brother came to occupy a similar place of prominence.

Paul, though, looked at James, Cephas, and John spiritually and so did not attach undue importance to such outward distinction or to what these men formerly were by reason of their close association with Jesus Christ while on earth. Outward appearances did not overawe the apostle and make him feel inferior.

The Greek word *diaphéro*, here having the sense of “is of importance,” “does matter,” or “makes a difference,” is preceded by a strong negative (*oudén*), signifying “not at all,” “in no way,” or “in no respect.” Since the verb *diaphéro* is in the present tense, this indicates that Paul continued to have this view when writing to the Galatians.

Pointing to the spiritual reason for his statement about those who “seemed to be something,” Paul said, “[the] face of man God does not accept.” Since the “face” (*prósopon*) is an individual’s most distinctive feature, the expression “face of man” signifies man’s outward appearance. God’s not accepting the “face of man” is indicative of divine impartiality. Unlike humans who are impressed by what appears to the eyes, God does not accept anyone on that basis. The Most High revealed this very forcefully to the prophet Samuel in connection with Jesse’s son Eliab: “Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature....

Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but [YHWH] looks into the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7; NAB) Distinctions brought about by circumstances over which one has no control do not make one special. The Most High is not swayed by such distinctions, and the apostle knew that this truth was clearly set forth in the inspired Scriptures.

Respecting James, Cephas, and John, the apostle concluded, “to me, indeed, the noted ones presented nothing.” The Greek word *gár* denotes “for,” “indeed,” “in fact,” or “certainly.” As there appears to be no linkage of *gár* with the preceding words, its meaning apparently is “indeed” or “in fact,” not “for.” Paul used the strong negative *oudén* (here denoting “nothing”) to modify the verb *prosanatíthēmai* (*prós*, toward; *aná*, up; *títhēmi*, lay, put, or place). This verb may be understood in its basic sense—“lay, put or place before,” “present.” James, Cephas, and John did not “lay before” or “present” to Paul anything new that he needed to consider. They added absolutely “nothing” to the evangel that he had preached and continued to proclaim. The implication is that James, Cephas, and John were declaring the same evangel. (Regarding “noted ones” [form of *dokéo*], see comments on verse 2.)

Note: Many manuscripts, including the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, omit the definite article *ho* (the) before *theós* (God). It is, however, found in P46 (from about 200) and the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus.

Galatians 2:7

As to what they “saw,” “recognized,” or “perceived” about his commission, Paul continued, “But contrariwise [that is, instead of imparting anything new], seeing that I had been entrusted with the evangel for the uncircumcised as Peter [had] for the circumcised.”

Based on the evidence presented to them, James, Peter and John “saw” or recognized that Paul had been entrusted with the commission to declare the evangel to the uncircumcised or to the non-Jews. In no respect did they view what Paul was preaching as a different evangel. It was the same “good news” that they themselves declared. Paul’s role in making known the “glad tidings” to the non-Jews was the same as that of Peter in proclaiming the evangel to Jews and proselytes.

On the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection, Peter was the principal spokesman in bearing witness to the reality of the resurrection and what the Father had accomplished through his Son. (Acts 2:1–40) With the exception of his acting at divine direction in bringing the evangel to the Italian centurion Cornelius, his household and friends, Peter served primarily among the Jews. The apostle Paul, though, preached extensively among the non-Jews.

This was in keeping with his being called by God through Jesus Christ to be “an apostle to the nations.”

Galatians 2:8

Pointing to the same source for what he and Peter were able to accomplish, Paul added, “for the One working in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised also worked in me for [an apostleship to] the nations.” The Father is evidently being referred to as “the One.” In this case, the verb for “work” (*energéo*) seemingly has the sense of “empower” or “grant the ability,” and the objective of the divine working or empowering concerned the apostleships of Peter and Paul. While *eis*, the preposition preceding “apostleship” (*apostolé*), often means “in” or “into,” the apparent significance here is “for.” Thus, from the Most High, by means of his spirit, Peter and Paul received everything that they needed to discharge their respective ministries as apostles. Indicative of God’s working in them was their bold proclamation of the evangel and the many miracles that occurred through them. Clearly, Peter and Paul had the identifying marks of apostles—“signs and wonders, and mighty deeds.” (2 Corinthians 12:12, NAB). The sphere of their labors, though, was different, with Peter ministering to Jews and proselytes and Paul laboring chiefly among the non-Jewish peoples.

Galatians 2:9

James, Cephas, and John, based on their discussion with Paul, came to “know” (*ginósko*), discern, or recognize that he had been granted divine favour. This is the point the apostle made when he said, “and having recognized the favour given to me.” Paul’s accomplishments simply could not have been attributed to human effort. They were the product of the powerful operation of God’s spirit within him. There was no question about the fact that the apostle was a recipient of God’s “favour” or “grace” in a superabundant way. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul made this acknowledgment: “For I am the least of the apostles and am not really fit to be called an apostle, because I had been persecuting the Church of God; but what I am now, I am through the grace of God, and the grace which was given to me has not been wasted. Indeed, I have worked harder than all the others—not I, but the grace of God which is with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10, NJB) Especially in view of his past record as a persecutor, the “favour” or “grace” given to Paul revealed the greatness of divine mercy. This divine favour or kindness was unearned, unmerited, and undeserved.

In view of what the leading ones perceived about him and his preaching, Paul wrote: “James and Cephas and John, the ones who seemed [form of *dokéo*] to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas [the] right [hands] of fellowship in order that we [would serve] among the nations but they among the circumcised.”

“James the brother of the Lord” (1:19) and the apostles Cephas (the Semitic equivalent of the Greek name “Peter,” meaning “rock”) and John were regarded as “pillars” or outstanding supports of the congregation. According to Acts 15, James evidently presided when the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem congregation discussed whether circumcision and compliance with all the requirements of the Mosaic law were to be imposed on believing non-Jews. Probably because James figured so prominently at that time, Paul chose to mention his name first.

In referring to James, Cephas, and John as appearing to be pillars, Paul did not mean that they merely seemed to be such but, in actuality, were not prominent supports. Instead, he was calling attention to their reputation. They were highly esteemed as men who took the lead.

Fully convinced by the evidence presented to them, James, Cephas, and John acknowledged Paul and Barnabas as doing the same work and extended to them their right hands. (The Greek term for “right” here is plural.) This was an expression of their full acceptance of Paul and Barnabas as partners. Appropriately, therefore, the apostle referred to the “right [hands] of fellowship.” Complete concord existed among all. The five men evidently shook hands when agreeing upon the fields in which they would labour.

The book of Acts shows that Paul thereafter expressed great concern for the Jews living in the regions where he proclaimed the evangel. On the sabbath, he would customarily go to the place where they assembled for worship, using the opportunities extended to him to share the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the division of territory is not to be viewed as meaning that Paul and Barnabas agreed to preach exclusively to non-Jews, whereas James, Cephas, and John would limit their activity to Jews and proselytes. Instead, Paul and Barnabas would declare the evangel in regions with predominant non-Jewish populations, while James, Cephas, and John would concentrate on those areas where the Jews were in the majority.

Notes:

Manuscripts differ in the order of the names. The most ancient manuscripts list James first. This includes P46 (from about 200) and the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. A number of later manuscripts use the Greek form “Peter” and place it first. Possibly this change in the positions of the names occurred because Peter was mentioned in verse 8. Although this James was not the brother of John, copyists’ familiarity with the combination “James and John” may have been a factor in transposing the order of the names.

The words “and Cephas” are missing in the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. This is evidently a copyist’s error. In P46 (from about 200), the Greek name “Peter” appears instead of the Semitic equivalent “Cephas.”

Galatians 2:10

Although labouring among non-Jews, Paul and Barnabas were not to forget about the needs of fellow Jewish brothers. The apostle commented on this aspect, “only that we remember the poor.” Evidently these were mainly the poor or needy among the believing Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. To “remember” them would signify keeping ever in mind their needy condition and compassionately coming to their aid.

Paul was in complete heart harmony with the encouragement expressed by James, Cephas, and John. He added, “which very thing I also was eager to do.” The Greek verb (*spoudázō*) for “to be eager” basically means “to hasten” or “to hurry.” In this case, the term conveys the idea of earnest or diligent effort, coupled with strong motivation. It signifies “to do one’s best,” “spare no effort,” “work hard,” or “act quickly, eagerly.” Paul’s letters to the Romans and the Corinthians reveal that he did his best in keeping the poor in mind. He encouraged making contributions in behalf of needy Jewish believers and assumed personal responsibility for getting the donated funds to Jerusalem. Even the prospect of being arrested and deprived of his freedom did not deter Paul from discharging this responsibility. (Acts 21:11–14)

The apostle’s speaking in the first person appears to reflect the circumstance that he was no longer working with Barnabas as his partner. A sharp difference of opinion about having Mark accompany them on a second evangelizing trip led to their laboring in different areas. (Acts 15:36–41)

Galatians 2:11

Further emphasizing his equality with the apostles, Paul continued: “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face.”

No time indicator is given about Cephas’ (Peter’s) visit in Antioch. Since, up to this point, Paul’s account has followed a chronological order, it is reasonable to conclude that Peter went to Antioch after it was unanimously agreed that circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law were not requirements for non-Jewish believers.

The Greek term for “withstand” (*anthístēmi*) has the sense of “resist,” “oppose,” or “stand one’s ground.” A direct confrontation was involved. It was face-to-face and public. By not holding back from correcting Peter in this manner, Paul showed that he did not regard himself as an inferior.

The apostle's firm stand, however, was motivated by deep concern for the preservation of the evangel in purity. In no way did Paul try to elevate himself at Peter's expense.

Commenting on the reason for his speaking out, Paul said of Peter, "because he was condemned." The Greek word for "condemn" (*kataginósko*) can signify being condemned by one's own actions or words. It may also be, however, that Paul meant that others, particularly non-Jewish believers with whom association was discontinued, could see that Peter was in the wrong.

Note: While the Greek "Peter" appears in many manuscripts, the Semitic equivalent "Cephas" is found in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, as well as the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus.

Galatians 2:12

Explaining why Peter was condemned, Paul continued: "For before certain ones came from James, he used to eat with non-Jews [*metá ton ethnón*, with the nations]; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing the ones from among the circumcised."

Paul did not reveal why these certain ones came to Antioch. The words "from James" could mean that James had actually sent them. In view of Peter's already being in Antioch, however, it seems unusual that James would have sent a delegation to Antioch to check on how believers responded to the decision about what was required of non-Jewish believers. Possibly these men were "from James" because they closely identified themselves with him. Believers from Jerusalem and Judea may have had a great interest in the Antioch congregation, since the Jerusalem congregation had originally sent Barnabas to Antioch. (Acts 11:22)

A later incident mentioned in the book of Acts provides some indication about the thinking of the certain ones "from James." On what proved to be Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, he saw James and the elders of the Jerusalem congregation. At that time the apostle was told: "Brother, you see how many thousands of believers there are from among the Jews, and they are all zealous observers of the law. They have been informed that you are teaching all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses and that you are telling them not to circumcise their children or to observe their customary practices. What is to be done? They will surely hear that you have arrived. So do what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow. Take these men and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses that they may have their heads shaved. In this way everyone will know that there is nothing to the reports they have been given

about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law.” (Acts 21:20–24, NAB)

Understandably, Jewish believers with such great zeal for the law that they continued to share in the sacrificial services at the temple would not be inclined to associate freely with uncircumcised believers whose very presence in the sacred precincts would have been a capital offense. Strict separation from all non-Jews was part of their customary way of life. From childhood, they had been taught that it was sinful to eat with anyone other than Jews and proselytes. (Compare Acts 11:2, 3.) Although believing that Jesus was indeed the Christ, they continued to live as Jews in the Jewish community. Their view of non-Jews basically remained the same. Since, in Jerusalem and Judea, the congregations were Jewish, association with fellow believers did not result in regular contact with non-Jewish believers as it did in congregations elsewhere.

A traditional account recorded by Eusebius in the early part of the fourth century presents a picture of James that would have appealed to believing Jews who faithfully followed the requirements of the Mosaic law. Eusebius quoted the words of Hegesippus, who lived in the second century: “The charge of the Church passed to James the brother of the Lord, together with the Apostles. He was called the ‘Just’ by all men from the Lord’s time to ours, since many are called James, but he was holy from his mother’s womb. He drank no wine or strong drink, nor did he eat flesh; no razor went upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not go to the baths.” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, chap. XXIII, translated by Kirsopp Lake) To what extent, however, this traditional account preserves an accurate portrayal of James cannot be determined.

Before “certain ones from James” arrived, Peter had no scruples about eating with non-Jewish believers. Years earlier, he had been taught by means of a vision that he should not regard anyone as defiled or unclean. (Acts 10:28) Therefore, he had unhesitatingly entered the home of Cornelius and, for the first time in his life, eaten with uncircumcised people. (Acts 11:3) From then onward, Peter no longer considered it sinful to associate with non-Jews.

Not all Jewish believers, however, grasped the full significance of what Peter had been taught. While recognizing that non-Jews could become believers, many believing Jews did not abandon the view that freely associating with any uncircumcised people was wrong. Peter was fully aware that this was the opinion of certain Jews “from James.” So he began to distance himself from believing non-Jews. The Greek words for “withdraw” (*hypostéllo*) and “separate” (*aphorízo*) are in the imperfect tense, suggesting that Peter did this gradually or progressively. Apparently he started to limit his association with

non-Jewish believers and progressively confined all close fellowship to Jewish believers. Thus, he began to treat his non-Jewish brothers as if they were unfit companions.

Peter did this, as Paul noted, “fearing the ones from among the circumcised,” that is, those Jews who had come “from James.” It may be that Peter feared losing esteem in their eyes, as they would have judged his associating freely with non-Jewish believers as sinful. Apparently concern about his standing with certain fellow Jews caused him temporarily to disown his non-Jewish brothers.

Notes:

The reading of P46 (from about 200) seems to be *tina* (certain one) instead of the plural *tinas* (certain ones) appearing in most ancient manuscripts.

The plural *élthon* is generally regarded as the correct reading, even though the singular *élthen* (he came) is found in P46 (from about 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. It is not likely that Peter would have been moved to change his conduct toward non-Jewish brothers on account of just one visiting Jewish believer. So, there appears to be sound reason for accepting the plural *élthon* as the correct reading.

Galatians 2:13

Peter’s wrong course affected Jewish believers in the Antioch congregation. Paul added: “And the remainder of the Jews also joined him in [this] hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.” The Greek verb *synypokrínomai* denotes “acting hypocritically along with others,” or “joining others in dissembling or putting on a pretense.” In its basic sense, the noun *hypokrités* signifies “one who answers” and came to be the designation for an “actor,” “one who plays a part on the stage.” Since actors wore large masks equipped with devices for amplifying the voice, the term *hypokrités* came to have a metaphoric sense—“a person who plays a part, puts on a pretense, or dissembles.”

As an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter was highly respected and occupied an influential position. Therefore, his withdrawing from non-Jewish believers and separating himself had a bad effect on other Jewish believers in Antioch, prompting them to imitate his example in giving the group of Jews from Jerusalem the impression that they were in heart sympathy with a separatist stance regarding all non-Jews. Even Barnabas, who had labored with Paul in bringing the evangel to uncircumcised peoples, did not resist the pressure to act out this lie. He may have justified his course by concluding that it was but a temporary measure to avoid giving needless offense to fellow Jews. All,

however, apparently failed to recognize the seriousness of their pretense or hypocrisy. The word for “lead astray” (*synapágomai*) can also denote “to be carried away.”

Note: The word *kaí*, translated “also” in this case, is found in numerous manuscripts. It is, however, missing in P46 (from about 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus. The omission of *kaí*, however, does not change the meaning of Paul’s words.

Galatians 2:14

Paul acted quickly. He continued: “But when I saw that they were not walking in line with the truth of the evangel, I said to Cephas before all: ‘If you, being a Jew, like a non-Jew [*ethnikós*, nation-like] and not like a Jew [*ioudaikós*, Jewish-like] live, how can you compel non-Jews [literally, nations] to Judaize?’”

Indicative of the sharp difference between his firm stand and the action of the others is the apostle’s use of the conjunction *allá* (but), a marker of strong contrast. Paul “saw” or “recognized” the wrongness of what Peter, Barnabas, and other Jews in the Antioch congregation were doing. The Greek verb *orthopodéo* (*orthós*, straight, upright; *podós*, foot) denotes “to walk uprightly or straight,” “to conduct oneself aright.” It is in the present tense and, therefore, indicates that the “walk” or “course” was then in progress. The verb is followed by the preposition *prós*, meaning “toward” but here having the significance of “according to” or “in line with.” Peter, Barnabas, and the others were not “walking” in harmony with the “truth” embodied in the evangel. Their course negated the vital truth that both Jews and non-Jews could enjoy a clean standing before God on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ. A refusal to fellowship and eat with uncircumcised believers implied that they were still defiled or unclean and, hence, unacceptable companions.

It is inconceivable that believing Jews who refused to join their non-Jewish brothers at common meals would have been willing to eat from the same loaf and drink from the same cup in remembrance of Christ. Left unchecked, a deliberate withdrawal and separation from non-Jewish believers would have divided the congregation, the body of Christ. It was only by joint fellowship, partaking of the same loaf and the same cup, that believing Jews and non-Jews; men and women; slaves, freemen, and masters could demonstrate their unity as members of Christ’s body with an approved standing before God as his children. (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17) Far too much was at stake for Paul to have tolerated any compromise in order to keep from offending certain legalistic-minded Jews. The apostle knew that a failure to accept, on the basis of race, tribe, sex, or social standing, any believer as an approved child of God constituted a rejection of the truth that was clearly revealed in the evangel. (Colossians 3:11)

Paul, therefore, publicly reproofed Peter. While all the other Jewish brothers were guilty of playing false, Peter's example had been responsible for inducing them to adopt the same behaviour. So Paul's directing his words of reproof to Peter served well in correcting everyone.

Though a Jew, Peter had earlier conducted himself like a non-Jew, not adhering to Jewish separatism but eating with uncircumcised believers and treating them as brothers with an approved standing before God. Peter's discontinuing association with uncircumcised believers, however, suggested that his non-Jewish brothers would only be acceptable companions if they got circumcised and submitted to the requirements of the Mosaic law. Rightly, then, Paul spoke of Peter's action as "compelling" and "forcing" Gentile believers to become Jews. Peter's course was self-contradictory, and Paul's pointed question made this forcefully clear.

The words that follow this question (verses 15–21) may be a continuation of Paul's words of reproof, or his further development of the subject, the objective being to correct the Galatians.

Notes:

While many manuscripts contain the Greek name Peter, the Semitic equivalent Cephas has more ancient manuscript support (including P46, Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Alexandrinus).

Manuscripts vary in the placement of *zēs* (live). In the Majority text (represented mainly by Byzantine manuscripts), the term follows *ethnikós*, whereas *zēs* follows *ioudaikós* in the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, as well as the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. The difference in the position of the verb, however, does not alter the meaning.

The reading *pós* (how) has the support of P46 (from about 200), the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and numerous other ancient manuscripts. The Majority text (represented chiefly by Byzantine manuscripts), though, reads *tí* (why). This variation does not materially affect the meaning of Paul's words.

2:15-21. Justification and the Jewish law

Verses 15-18. Jews (not just Gentiles) must be justified by faith

Galatians 2:15

Evidently with the situation at Antioch in mind (if not part of the reproof directed to Peter), Paul included himself, "We, by nature, Jews and not sinners

from the nations.” Like Peter and other believing Jews, Paul was a Jew by nature, that is, by birth. The Jews viewed all people who were uncircumcised and without the law as defiled sinners. The law was an expression of the divine will, setting forth what God required for one to be “holy” as he is “holy,” clean, or pure. Therefore, the non-Jews who had not accepted the law as their guide were unclean sinners.

Galatians 2:16

Regarding the basic truth that believing Jews knew or recognized, Paul continued: “But knowing that a man is not justified by works of law but only through faith in Jesus Christ, also we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of law, because by works of law no flesh will be justified.”

The term “justify” (*dikaióo*) here denotes coming to have an approved relationship with God, not having sin reckoned against one. Believing Jews “knew,” recognized, or were fully aware that they could never hope to prove themselves wholly righteous before God by “works of law,” that is, by their efforts to fulfil the requirements of the Mosaic law. Regardless of their diligence and zeal in observing the law, they would still miss the mark of perfect obedience and, therefore, be condemned by the law as sinners. Since flawless obedience was impossible, they could not be justified on the basis of personal merit.

The Greek preposition (*ek*), commonly rendered “by,” means “out of.” Accordingly, justification is not “out of”—neither having its source in nor resulting from—“works of law,” the kind of actions that the Mosaic law prescribed and which sinful humans could not carry out perfectly.

The only way in which any human can be justified or counted as righteous or guiltless by God is “through faith in Jesus Christ” or, more literally, “through faith of Jesus Christ.” This linkage of faith to God’s Son is not to be understood as meaning the “faith” belonging to him. Rather, it denotes the “faith,” or unqualified trust, that has Jesus Christ as its object. This faith is the means for obtaining forgiveness and, therefore, the righteous standing before God that is made possible through Christ’s sacrifice. (Acts 13:38, 39)

In Greek, the word *kaí* means “and,” “also,” or “even.” Because of the apparent contrast with non-Jews, the expression *kaí hemeís* probably means “also we.” Paul included himself when using “we,” with apparent reference to other believing Jews. Like the believing non-Jews, “we, too,” as Paul expressed it, “have believed in Christ Jesus.”

The Greek word for “believe” (*pisteúo*) is the verb form of “faith” (*pístis*). Therefore, “to believe in Christ Jesus” means “to put or have faith in” or “to place full trust in” him. Such putting of faith in God’s Son is of such a nature that the individuals doing so bind or attach themselves completely to Christ, resulting in a marvellous union with him.

Such a faith or implicit trust has a direct bearing on justification. As Paul added, “so that we might be justified out of faith in Christ.” The apostle had previously written “through” (*diá*) faith but now used “out of” (*ek*) and thus contrasted the true source for justification with the invalid one—“and not out of works of law.” Faith that has Christ as its object did result in justification, but justification does not have its source in or result from “works of law.” For the third time, Paul stressed that works of law could not lead to justification, concluding with the words, “because out of works of law no flesh will be justified.” “Flesh” (humans in their sinful or fallen state) cannot be pronounced guiltless on the basis of “works of law.” When attempting to prove themselves righteous by strict adherence to a particular code of law, all sinful humans are doomed to failure.

At the time consideration was given to whether believing non-Jews needed to be circumcised and charged to submit to the requirements of the Mosaic law, the apostle Peter (based on what he had witnessed in the home of Cornelius) expressed the same thought about the way in which both Jews and non-Jews gain divine approval. He said, God “made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now, then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” (Acts 15:7–11, NIV)

Notes:

The “but” (*de*) is missing in many manuscripts, including P46 (from about 200). It is, however, found in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and other manuscripts. Neither the inclusion nor the omission of the term affects the basic meaning of Paul’s words.

Manuscripts vary in reading either “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus.”

The most ancient extant manuscripts read *hóti*, whereas *dióti* is found in many other manuscripts. Since both words can be understood to mean “because,” the variation is insignificant.

Galatians 2:17

Continuing his argument, Paul raised the question: “But if we who seek to be justified in Christ were ourselves also found [to be] sinners, really Christ a

servant of sin?” To be justified “in Christ” evidently means having a guiltless standing before God by reason of being “in Christ,” at one with him. Paul’s question apparently relates to believing Jews. They had turned their backs on the law as being totally ineffectual in gaining a righteous standing with God. If their seeking to be justified exclusively “in” Jesus Christ did not lead to the desired result, they would prove to be worse sinners than they were while trying to gain righteousness by means of the law. They would find themselves outside the law like the Gentile sinners. That would mean that Jesus Christ had actually contributed to their sin and was serving the interests of sin.

The introductory “really” is a rendering of the Greek *ara*. Depending on the accent, this term can (1) point to a negative response to a question and have the significance of “really,” “indeed,” “then,” or “even,” or (2) may mean “thus,” “consequently,” or “therefore.” Since there is no verb in the phrase, “really Christ a servant of sin,” translators commonly insert “is” or another verb.

Paul began his sentence with the conditional “if” (*ei*). Accordingly, the phrase “really Christ a servant of sin” is evidently to be regarded as a deduction from the conditional statement and may mean, “indeed, would not Christ be a servant of sin?” The question form appears to be the preferable choice, as Christ is never the servant of sin.

The expression, “May it not happen,” provides a strong negative answer. It is impossible for the Son of God ever to be the promoter of sin. Paul’s negative exclamation may signify that such a thing should never be attributed to Jesus Christ—“perish the thought.” (See also comments on 3:21.)

Galatians 2:18

Apparently highlighting how inconsistent it would be for a believing Jew to teach or to imply that believing non-Jews needed to follow the precepts of the Mosaic law, Paul said: “For [*gár*] if what I tear down is what I again build up, I show myself [to be] a transgressor.” Although the Greek word *gár* can also mean “indeed” or “certainly,” it evidently here has the sense of “for,” linking what follows with Paul’s previous statement about justification and the impossibility of Christ’s ever being a servant of sin.

The “tearing down,” “destroying,” or “breaking down” (*katalyo*, a combination of *katá* [down] and *lyo* [loose]) apparently relates to the manner in which Jews, upon becoming believers, came to view the Mosaic law. They came to recognize that it could not help even one member of the sinful Jewish nation to be considered as guiltless by God. In thus representing the law as valueless from the standpoint of justification, believing Jews “tore” it down.

Consequently, when believing Jews implied (as Peter and others did when separating themselves from believing non-Jews) that uncircumcised peoples needed to submit themselves to the requirements of the law in order to enjoy full fellowship with them, they were building up the law. Their course indicated that, in the case of non-Jews, faith in Jesus Christ had to be supplemented by obedience to the Mosaic law in order for them to have the same standing before God that believing Jews enjoyed. Those involved in such building up would show that they had been wrong when tearing down the law with reference to justification. As Paul, continuing to speak of himself representatively, concluded: “I show myself to be a transgressor,” one who oversteps fixed limits.

Verses 19-21; Justification by faith cuts us off from legalism

Galatians 2:19

Regarding the Mosaic law, Paul noted: “For I, through law, died to law so that I might live to God.” In the Greek text, “I” (*egó*) is the first word and so occupies an emphatic position. Evidently the apostle was thereby stressing that he was speaking from personal experience. Although not preceded by the definite article, “law,” as indicated by the context, designates the Mosaic law. As in the previous verse, the word *gár* apparently means “for.” It serves to introduce why Paul would be a transgressor if he were to “build up” the law. The reason is that the law itself indicated that he could not gain a righteous standing through it.

The Mosaic law revealed to Paul that he was a sinner. Despite all his efforts to gain merit before God through observance of the law, he found himself condemned, falling short of its righteous requirements. The apostle’s experience with the law made him realize that he could never hope to gain a guiltless standing before God. As a result, Paul died to the law insofar as trying to gain a right relationship with God through or by means of it. It was “through” or “by means” of the law itself that this occurred. Since, however, he acquired an approved standing before God through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul was no longer under the condemnation of sin and dead in God’s sight by reason of his failure to live up perfectly to the requirements of the law. (Compare Ephesians 2:1-5.) The expression “live to God” may also signify to “live for God,” that is, to live a life that reflects submission to the divine will in attitude, word, and action. It is the kind of life that Jesus Christ exemplified. His will was his Father’s will.

Revealing why the law had no hold on him, Paul wrote: “I am crucified with Christ.” The apostle Paul employed the Greek term *systauróo*. While the prefix can indicate one’s being executed alongside another on a separate *staurós* (Matt. 27:44; Mark 15:32; John 19:32), the apostle evidently viewed himself as being put to death on the same *staurós* with Christ. Because of his having become a member of Christ’s body, Paul could speak of sharing in the experience of the

head of this body—the Christ. Hence, he, as one who had put forth extraordinary efforts to prove himself righteous by strict adherence to the law, died as if he had been nailed with Christ on the *staurós*. In his being put to death with God’s Son, Paul ceased to be under the control of the Mosaic law. He was discharged from the obligations imposed by a legal code. (Rom. 7:1–6)

Note: Ancient Greek writers used the word *staurós* to designate an upright pale or stake. The verb *stauróō*, therefore, meant “to attach to, suspend from, or affix to a stake [*staurós*] or timber [*xylon*]” (as it does in the Septuagint in the account about the sentence imposed on Haman [Esther 7:9, 10; compare Acts 5:30 and 10:39]). According to the minority view (expressed, for example, in Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, under “Cross, Crucify”), Jesus died on an upright pale. In the highly allegorical Epistle of Barnabas (probably written early in the second century), Jesus’ *staurós* is associated with the letter tau (T). Archaeological evidence, though very limited, indicates that the Romans did use a stake with a cross beam, but not in the position commonly associated with the stylized Latin cross.

Galatians 2:20

Commenting on the result of this kind of death with Christ, Paul added: “Living, however, no longer am I, but Christ is living in me.” The old “I” (*egó*) was dead. The zealous Pharisee Saul (Paul) who had outstripped others of his age in his devotion to tradition and progress in Judaism ceased to exist. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Paul was not the same man. All his vain striving to gain merit with God came to an end. The apostle had fully thrown himself upon the Father’s mercy and trusted unreservedly in the atoning power of Christ’s sacrifice. The clean standing that he enjoyed before God was due to his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through God’s Son, Paul began enjoying a newness of life, and that life was so intimately bound up with Jesus Christ that the apostle could speak of Christ as living “in” him. Paul perceived that the Son of God had fully taken possession of his very being.

With reference to his new life, the apostle continued: “But the [life] which I am now living in [the] flesh I am living in faith, the [faith] of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.” Though still “in the flesh” or a human, Paul lived “in” the element of faith. He had absolute confidence in the cleansing that God’s Son had effected. The apostle did not doubt that he had been justified through his faith in Jesus Christ. His new life reflected complete reliance on what God’s Son had accomplished. Faith, not a desire to prove himself righteous, was the motivating force in Paul’s life. His was the faith “of the Son of God.” The genitive construction “of the Son” does not mean “belonging to

the Son” but signifies “resting on the Son.” It is the faith that has Jesus Christ as its object.

Paul was filled with gratitude for what God’s Son had done for him. The apostle viewed the love and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in a very personal way. He did not merely speak of being included in this love and being among those for whom God’s Son gave himself up or sacrificed his life. Instead, Paul referred to Jesus Christ as the One “who loved *me* and gave himself up for *me*.”

Note: The reading “of Son of God” (*huiou tou theou*) has the support of many manuscripts, including the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. Other manuscripts, though read “of God and of Christ” (*theou kai Christou*). These include P46 (from about 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus.

Galatians 2:21

Therefore, it was unthinkable for Paul to return to an arrangement that rested on observing a legal code in order to gain divine approval. He continued: “I am not setting aside the favour of God; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ died for nothing.” In Greek, the “not” (*ouk*) precedes the verb meaning “I am setting aside,” adding emphasis to the negation. He firmly resisted any conduct suggesting that faith in Christ was insufficient to gain an approved standing before God. The Greek verb “set aside” or “nullify” (*athetéo*) is in the present tense, indicating that Paul’s not “setting aside the favour of God” continued to be his determination. For the apostle to have returned to proving himself righteous by striving to live up to the law or teaching that others should do so would have meant voiding the favour of God—the unmerited kindness shown in being justified through faith in Jesus Christ. It would have been like saying to the Father that his favour or grace was insufficient for attaining a righteous standing. The apostle, however, knew that, on his own merit, he could never hope to be righteous or guiltless before God. Paul’s life as a zealous Pharisee had amply demonstrated that to him. Never could he return to a legalistic observance of the law or, by word and action, imply that non-Jews needed to do so upon becoming believers.

If it had been possible for sinful humans to prove themselves righteous by perfect obedience to the law, there would have been no need for God’s Son to die. It would simply have been necessary to teach obedience to the law, making the sacrifice of Christ superfluous. As Paul said, “then Christ died for nothing” (Greek, *doreán*, derived from *doreá*, gift; hence, meaning “as a free gift,” “for nothing,” “needlessly,” or “purposelessly”). Righteousness, that is, being viewed as righteous before God, however, was not attainable by sinful humans “through

law.” Instead, the Mosaic law condemned them, clearly identifying them as guilty of sin before the Almighty.



Galatians, chapter 3

(From the King James Version 1611)

- 1: O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?
- 2: This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
- 3: Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?
- 4: Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.
- 5: He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
- 6: Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
- 7: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.
- 8: And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen

through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9: So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

11: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

12: And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

14: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

15: Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17: And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

18: For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19: Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20: Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

21: Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

22: But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23: But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25: But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26: For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27: For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Chapter 3

3:1-5. Justification and the Holy Spirit

Verses 1-3. The gift of the Spirit is by faith

Galatians 3:1

Shocked, dumbfounded, and indignant about their turning aside from the true evangel, Paul addressed the Galatians as “senseless.” The Greek word *anóetos* is the opposite of possessing understanding, perception, or discernment. It signifies “foolish” or “stupid.” When giving credence to false teaching, the Galatians proved themselves to be gullible, lacking good sense or sound reasoning. By using such strong language, Paul evidently wanted to bring the Galatians to their senses.

Unable to fathom what had happened to them, the apostle wrote, “Who bewitched you, [you] to whom, before [whose] eyes, Jesus Christ was depicted [as] crucified?”

In this context, the Greek word *baskaíno* is commonly understood to mean “bewitch,” “put under a spell,” or “exercise a malign influence upon.” In the Septuagint, this term is used regarding the eye that begrudges or is inclined toward evil—the “evil eye.” (Deuteronomy 28:54, 56) The related Greek adjective *báskanos* appears in a context that points to a similar meaning—“stingy,” “greedy,” “grudging,” or “ungenerous.” (Prov. 23:6; 28:22)

In other ancient writings, however, *báskanos* also can denote “slandorous.” Since the malicious lies of a slanderer can deceive others, there is a possibility that, in the context of Paul’s words, *baskaíno* simply means “deceive.” Puzzled and distressed, the apostle raised the question as to who could possibly have had such a baneful influence on the Galatians.

The Greek expression *kat’ ophthalmoús* (“according to eyes”) is an idiom that signifies “before or in front of the eyes.” In this case, the reference, however, is not to a vivid portrayal of the manner of Jesus’ death. Rather, Paul’s preaching about the meaning of Christ’s death was so clear that it could be compared to making the Galatians actually see Jesus Christ nailed to a *staurós* in order to atone for sins.

“Depict” is one definition of the Greek term *prográpho*, which literally means “write before.” Besides being used in the sense of “write before or above,”

prográpho may also denote “put on public display,” “set forth publicly,” “depict openly,” or “set forth in a public announcement” for all to read. Paul left no doubt in the minds of the Galatians about God’s arrangement for salvation through Jesus Christ. So they had no reason to believe anyone who insisted that, in addition to faith in God’s Son, circumcision and observance of the Mosaic law were needed to be divinely approved.

Notes:

Numerous later manuscripts, after *ebáskanen* (bewitched), add the words *té aletheía mé peúthesthai* (found in Galatians 5:7), meaning “the truth not to obey.” These words are, however, not included in the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. For this reason, they are missing in modern translations.

Many later manuscripts add *en hymín* (in you; here having the sense of “among you”) after *proegráphe* (depicted). The words *en hymín* are absent from the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, accounting for their not being found in modern translations.

Galatians 3:2

The apostle continued: “This only I want to learn from you, did you receive the spirit out of works of law or out of a hearing of faith?” To rescue them from the trap into which they had fallen by listening to the words of a Judaizing element, Paul tried to stir up the reasoning faculties of the Galatians. In effect, he told them, “Answer my question.”

Regarding their receiving the spirit, the Galatians could give only one answer to Paul’s question. God’s spirit had not been imparted to them “out of works of law.” This had not taken place as a result of their observing the precepts of a legal code. What had happened to the Galatians did not have its source or origin in their seeking to conform to the requirements of the Mosaic law.

The Greek word *akoé* may be defined as “report,” “news,” “message,” or as “hearing” or “listening.” Hence, the expression “hearing of faith” can signify either a message that has faith as its prime focus or the responsive hearing that led to faith. Both meanings may be found in the various renderings of modern translations. Since the message could either be accepted or rejected, the emphasis is more likely on the response in faith to what was heard. Because of their faith in Jesus Christ, the Galatians received God’s spirit. That faith was expressed after they heard Paul proclaim the glad tidings. (Compare Romans 10:17.) Not even in a limited way was observance of a legal code involved in

their coming under the influence of God's spirit. As uncircumcised non-Jews, they never had been subject to the Mosaic law, and Paul did not impose its requirements on them. Their experience in receiving the Holy Spirit was like that of Cornelius and others who put faith in Jesus Christ upon hearing Peter declare the evangel.

Notes:

Besides having the basic meaning of "wind" or "spirit," the Greek word *pneúma* can designate the "prevailing attitude" or "disposition"—that aspect of a person's inner life that influences thought, words, and actions. In Greek, this term is neuter. Because of the predominant theological view about "God's spirit," translators usually use the pronoun "he" (not "it") and capitalize "spirit" when the reference is to the "Holy Spirit." A number of versions, however, read "spirit" (without an initial capital) at Joel 2:28, 29, [3:1, 2, in some translations], and a few translations follow through consistently without capitalization in Peter's quotation of this passage.

The angel Gabriel is quoted as using the words "Holy Spirit" in parallel with "power of the Most High." (Luke 1:35) This reveals that the "Holy Spirit" or "God's spirit" is the power proceeding from the Almighty and is at his disposal for the accomplishment of his will. An examination of the use of *pneúma* in the Septuagint corroborates that the spirit of God is an influencing, guiding, and energizing power. At times, God's spirit operated mightily in the case of Israelite judges, prophets, and others, enabling them to accomplish extraordinary feats, enhancing their abilities, or impelling them to reveal or express the divine purpose or will. All (not just some) who put faith in Jesus Christ were filled with God's spirit, and it continued with them, not being limited to specific times only. The Holy Spirit produced marvellous changes in their lives and empowered them to be courageous in proclaiming the glad tidings. Additionally, through the spirit, a variety of miraculous gifts were imparted.

Galatians 3:3

In view of what the Galatians had experienced, the apostle tried to bring them to their senses with strongly worded, pointed questions. He wrote: "Are you so senseless? Having begun with spirit, are you now ending with flesh?"

The Galatians had received God's spirit while they were in an uncircumcised state. This was unmistakable proof of their being divinely approved. Therefore, Paul asked them how they could be so foolish as to accept the idea that they did not enjoy a proper standing with God but, to be fully approved, needed to get circumcised and submit to the regulations of the Mosaic law. The apostle repeated the word *anóetos*, meaning "foolish," "senseless," or "stupid," which

he had earlier applied to the Galatians (3:1). It was hard for Paul to comprehend how they could be so stupid, yes, so dull in their perception.

Upon accepting the glad tidings as God's word or message, the Galatians came under the influence of Holy Spirit and thus were impelled to make changes in their lives in order to be more like their Lord or Master, Jesus Christ. They began their course in or with spirit, since the spirit prompted them to conform themselves ever closer to the example of God's Son. Hence, the Galatians were cooperating with the work that the Father was doing within them by means of his spirit.

Under the influence of false teachers, however, they ceased to look to the Most High to aid them to attain the full stature of his children. The Galatians started a process that was fleshly, one that had its source in the "flesh," not in the "spirit." They began to think in terms of what they could do on their own to prove themselves righteous. By legalistic observance of the outward forms of worship set forth in the Mosaic law, including the keeping of certain days or festivals, they imagined that they would gain God's favour. Such legalistic observance was fleshly, that is, it relied on the flesh (human effort) and not on what God was doing by means of his spirit. Legalistic observance of a code of law also appeals to the sinful flesh. It promotes pride in human achievement and gives rise to feelings of contemptuous superiority in relation to those who seriously fall short. (Compare Luke 18:11, 12.) By means of his question, Paul emphasized how foolish it was for the Galatians to start their life as Christians by yielding to God's spirit and, then, to abandon this course—to seek being completed as Christians through fleshly means, through personal efforts alone.

Verses 4-5. Christian living is by faith

Galatians 3:4

The apostle raised yet another question: "Did you suffer so much in vain, if indeed even in vain?"

Generally, the Greek word *páscho* denotes "to suffer." It can, however, refer to anything that a person might undergo—both good and bad. If understood in a favourable sense, the experiences would include receiving God's spirit and all the blessings resulting from being divinely approved on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. While the context does not specifically mention suffering, there also are no qualifying words to indicate that *páscho* here means having favourable experiences. Therefore, it appears preferable to understand *páscho* in its usual sense (suffer), especially since it was common for believers to undergo difficulties because of being disciples of Jesus Christ. The book of Acts reveals that believers in the Roman province of Galatia were no exception.

When the Galatians embraced the evangel and abandoned all attempts to prove themselves righteous by legalistic conformity to a code of laws, they became an object of hostility. The unbelieving Jews would not accept the fact that a person could be divinely approved on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and without having to become a Jewish proselyte. Upon discerning that Christians did not insist on circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law as being essential for gaining God's approval, the unbelieving Jews started a campaign of persecution to stop the spread of Christianity. For example, in Pisidian Antioch, the unbelieving Jews, upon seeing non-Jews taking an interest in the evangel, became jealous and began to contradict Paul's teaching. The apostle and Barnabas then told them: "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46, NRSV). As more non-Jews became disciples of Jesus Christ, the unbelieving Jews succeeded in stirring up the influential people in Antioch to such a degree that Paul and Barnabas were forced to leave. Later, in Iconium, the opposition of the unbelieving Jews reached the point that they and those who sided with them made plans to stone Paul and Barnabas. Then, in Lystra, unbelieving Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium stirred up the native non-Jewish population. Paul was then actually stoned. Believing he was dead, those responsible dragged him outside the city. (Acts 13:50–14:19)

The forced departure of Paul and Barnabas from Antioch and other cities did not eliminate persecution for the disciples who remained behind. (Acts 14:22) These disciples continued to face opposition from the unbelieving Jews and those who supported them.

If the Galatians initially had submitted to circumcision and taken upon themselves the yoke of the Mosaic law, they would have escaped persecution from the Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Christ. Therefore, the apostle rightly asked the Galatians whether their experiences of the past had been "in vain," without any purpose or reason. Paul did not believe that what they had undergone was in vain and indicated this by expressing himself in a conditional sense—"if indeed [*gé*] even [*kaí*] in vain."

The Greek term *gé* is an expression of emphasis and here evidently limits the conditional assertion that begins with "if" (*eí*). The Greek expression *eí gé* would, therefore, denote "if really" or "if indeed." While *kaí* usually means "and" or "also," it can signify "even," and this meaning would fit the context.

To Paul, it was inconceivable that the Galatians would conclude that their sufferings meant nothing to them, that they had made a big mistake in not taking a course that could have spared them persecution. His question was designed to

cause them to think seriously, to make them see that what they had endured was because of their having taken the right course. The apostle's words anticipate that the Galatians would be moved to say that their faithful endurance under suffering had not been in vain but was purposeful.

Galatians 3:5

Continuing to reason with them, Paul said: "The [One] then giving you the spirit and working powerful deeds in you, [does he do this] out of works of law or out of a hearing of faith?"

Although the spirit is imparted to believers through Christ (Acts 2:33), the ultimate source or the Giver of the spirit is the Father. (1 Thessalonians 4:8; Titus 3:4–6) The Greek verb *epichoregéō* may be defined as "give," "furnish," "supply," or "provide." It is an intensified form of *choregeó*, which in its basic sense means (1) "to lead a chorus or dance," or (2) "to care for the expense of a chorus." The idea of providing a chorus at one's own expense is the basis for the meaning "to supply," "to furnish," or "to provide." Since *epichoregéō* is intensified by the prefix *epí*, it can mean "to supply fully or abundantly." Thus, Paul called attention to God's abundant or generous providing of the spirit to the Galatians.

The Greek expression "in (*en*) you" is commonly translated "among you." When thus understood, the "mighty deeds" could refer to the miracles that were occurring among the Galatians, probably including the expelling of demons, healing the afflicted, and speaking in tongues or languages that they had never learned. If, however, the Greek *en* means "in," the "mighty deeds" would designate the powerful workings of God's spirit within the Galatians. They must have been aware of the tremendous effect on their lives and sensed the impelling, energizing, and motivating power working within them. (Compare Ephesians 1:19.)

What the Galatians had previously experienced did not come about "out of works of law." The abundant supplying of God's spirit to them did not result from or have its source in their getting circumcised and submitting themselves to the requirements of the Mosaic law. God's working "mighty deeds" in their midst or within them personally began while they were in an uncircumcised state and without their having taken upon themselves the yoke of any legal code.

There was only one answer to the apostle Paul's question. What had happened to the Galatians with reference to God's spirit and "mighty deeds" was "out of a hearing of faith." While the expression "hearing of faith" can mean either (1) responding in faith to the message that was heard or (2) "the message which proclaims faith" (Wuest), the first meaning is preferable, as it best fits the point

the apostle made with his question. Once the Galatians responded in faith to the evangel (the glad tidings which revealed that an approved standing with God was possible solely on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished by dying sacrificially), the Holy Spirit became operative toward them, miracles were performed in their midst, and arvellous changes began taking place within them individually. Accordingly, all this occurred “out of” or as a result of a response in faith. That faith was an unqualified trust in Christ, the one on whom the message declared to the Galatians focused.

3:6-9. Justification and the Abrahamic covenant

Verses 6-9. The Abrahamic covenant is on the basis of faith

Galatians 3:6

Their coming to be regarded as righteous was on the same basis that God counted the forefather of the Jews as righteous. Paul continued: “Just as Abraham ‘put faith in God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’” The Greek verb *pisteúo* is commonly translated “believe,” since English has no verb form for “faith” (as does Greek). This term denotes to “put faith, trust, or confidence in.” Sinful humans cannot attain “righteousness” on their own merit. They are flawed and not without guilt before God. Hence, righteousness must be “credited,” “reckoned,” or “counted” to them. The preposition preceding righteousness (*eis*), often meaning “into,” here points to the result of the “counting” or “reckoning.”

Even Abraham did not gain an approved standing before God by getting circumcised and starting to live up to the requirements of a legal code. While yet uncircumcised, Abram (Abraham) was told: “Look up at the skies and count the stars, if indeed you can count them. ... So shall your seed be.” (Genesis 15:5) It was then that the words Paul quoted were applied to Abraham. The Genesis account reads: “He put his faith in YHWH, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) The case of the Galatians was just like that of Abraham. God reckoned them as righteous because of their faith in the seed of promise, Jesus Christ, and Abraham was counted as righteous on account of his faith in the divine promise about the seed.

Galatians 3:7

Identifying the true sons of Abraham, Paul continued: “Know, therefore, that the ones out of faith—these are sons of Abraham.”

In this case, the Greek verb for “know” (*ginósko*) may be either indicative or imperative. If indicative, this would mean that the Galatians knew who the real sons of Abraham were. It is more likely, however, that, instead of merely

acknowledging what the Galatians already knew, the apostle was continuing to develop his argument regarding who is reckoned as righteous. Therefore, “know” evidently has the imperative sense of “recognize,” “understand,” “perceive,” or “see.”

The expression “the ones out of faith” indicates that those thus described have their origin in faith. It is their faith, their complete trust, that has made them what they are.

Sonship is not necessarily dependent on fleshly descent. John the Baptizer pointed this out to certain Pharisees and Sadducees who wanted to be immersed. They imagined themselves to be children of Abraham and thus automatically in line for God’s special blessing. John, though, disabused their minds of such thinking: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” (Matthew 3:7–9, NAB) Similarly, Jesus Christ said: “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God; Abraham did not do this.” (John 8:39, 40, NAB) Abraham put faith in God’s promise about the seed, but the Jews whom Jesus addressed rejected the very one to whom the promise that Abraham believed pointed. Because these Jews acted contrary to the ways of Abraham, they had no right to call themselves his children. Instead of having the faith of Abraham, they manifested the murderous spirit of Satan. Hence, Jesus Christ could say to them: “You are from your father the devil.” (John 8:44, NRSV)

Abraham was what he was—the friend of God and one counted as righteous by him—on account of his faith. Since Abraham thus sprang from faith, all who (as divinely approved persons) likewise have their origin in faith are the real sons of Abraham.

Note: Manuscripts vary in reading either *huiοί eisin* (sons are) or *eisin huiοί* (are sons). This variation is immaterial when translating.

Galatians 3:8

Paul continued to reason with the Galatians: “But the Scripture, foreseeing that God justifies the nations [non-Jews] out of faith announced the evangel beforehand to Abraham that, ‘in you, all the nations will be blessed.’”

Many translations render the Greek word “but” (*δέ*) as “and.” The term itself can also mean “now,” “then,” or “so.” Possibly *δέ* is to be understood as introducing an implied contrast that being children of Abraham “out of faith”

was not a new thought. It was announced centuries earlier to Abraham. The term *graphé* (from *grápho*, to write), “Scripture,” is here personified and evidently denotes the written expression of God’s purpose. Since “Scripture” is the word or message of God, the apostle represented it as doing what its Author did—“foreseeing” and “announcing” the evangel. Scripture pointed forward to the time when God would count as righteous, upright, or guiltless people other than the chosen nation that descended from Abraham. This would be “out of” their faith, that is, the basis for justification would spring or result from their faith, their absolute confidence and trust in God, his promises and his arrangements.

That people of the nations would be blessed “in Abraham” was indeed “good news,” as special blessings only could come to those whom God views as approved, righteous, or upright. Being holy or pure, the Almighty could never bestow his favour on those who are unclean or defiled in his sight.

The glad tidings about blessing people of the nations was announced beforehand to Abraham. Paul used the term *proeuangelízomai*, (*pro*, before; a verb form of the noun *euangélion*, evangel, good news, or glad tidings), which only appears once in the Scriptures and denotes “to declare the glad tidings in advance.” In proof of the fact that people of the nations would be reckoned as righteous on account of their faith, the apostle quoted part of God’s statement to Abraham. (Genesis 12:3) The Greek words, however, do not correspond exactly to the reading of the Septuagint. While Paul wrote “all the nations,” the extant reading of the Septuagint is, “all the tribes of the earth.” Nevertheless, the sense of the apostle’s quotation is the same.

Since the apostle had already made it clear that the real children of Abraham are such “out of faith,” their being blessed “in” Abraham appears to mean that people of the nations share in the blessing by reason of belonging to Abraham. He is their spiritual forefather or ancestor. As his spiritual children, they share in his blessing.

Galatians 3:9

Concluding his argument, Paul added: “Therefore, the ones out of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” The Greek term *hóste* (therefore) links what follows with the previous words that, “in Abraham,” people of the nations would be blessed. Accordingly, as a consequence of being blessed “in Abraham,” they are also blessed with Abraham, the man of faith.

“The ones out of faith” are all whose identity has its source in or springs from faith—complete trust or reliance on God and his promises. They are persons of faith.

In being described as “faithful” (*pistós*), Abraham is being designated as a possessor of faith, or a man of faith. Because of fully trusting the Almighty, never doubting the divine promises, Abraham came to be richly blessed. The inspired psalmist sums up what the Most High did for Abraham and other faithful patriarchs: “When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in [the land of Canaan], they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. [God] allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: ‘Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm.’” (Ps. 105:12–15, NIV) All persons with a faith like Abraham’s become recipients of God’s blessing, thus sharing with him in being reckoned as righteous or guiltless from the divine standpoint and experiencing other accompanying favours.

3:10-18. Justification and blessing

Verses 10-13. Redemption from the curse.

Galatians 3:10

Drawing a contrast, Paul continued: “For as many as are out of works of law are under a curse.” All whose identity is “out of works of law” (that is, has its source in the observance of the Mosaic law) are under a curse, not a blessing. Anyone who endeavoured to prove himself righteous before God by adherence to a legal code was doomed to fail. No matter how conscientious and scrupulous a person might be in such observance, he would be unable to measure up perfectly to the requirements of the Mosaic law. Instead of being blessed as was believing Abraham, the transgressor of the law would come under a curse. The law would condemn him as a transgressor deserving to be punished.

To back up his point, the apostle appealed to the Scriptures with the words, “for it is written.” He then quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26: “Cursed is everyone who does not persevere [in] all the [things] written in the scroll of the law [so as] to do them.” Paul’s quotation differs from the extant Septuagint text. It reads: “Cursed is every man who does not persevere in all the words of this law [so as] to do them.” Nevertheless, Paul’s quotation, the present Hebrew text, and the extant text of the Septuagint make the point that a failure to live up to the law leads to coming under a curse. The word for “persevere” (*emméno*) basically means “remain” or “abide” and, in this context, denotes to continue to heed or obey.

Note: While *en* (in) appears after *emménei* (abide, remain, persevere) in many manuscripts, the word is missing in such ancient manuscripts as P46 (about 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and the original text of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus (though later added by a corrector).

Galatians 3:11

Presenting additional Scriptural proof that it is impossible to gain a righteous standing before God on the basis of adherence to a legal code, Paul added: “But that in law no one is justified before God [is] evident, because ‘the righteous one will live out of faith.’”

Since the Greek *dé* can mean “but,” “so,” “now,” or “then,” translations vary in the terms used. If understood in the sense of “but,” the word introduces an additional argument and signifies “moreover” or “on the other hand.”

The Greek expression “in law” is commonly rendered “by the law” or “by means of the law.” This would signify that the Mosaic law is not the instrument through which one is justified before God. It is possible, however, that “in law” signifies “in the realm” or “in the sphere” of the law, indicating that justification belongs to a distinctly different realm or sphere. In the sphere of the Mosaic law, a person cannot be justified, declared guiltless, or pronounced as righteous before God. Since efforts to keep the law perfectly would not succeed but only expose one in line for a curse, no sinful human could prove that he is righteous and deserving of life.

To show that justification had no connection with the Mosaic law, Paul used the word *délos*, meaning “evident,” “clear,” “plain,” or “manifest” and then quoted from Habakkuk 2:4. (See the notes and comments in the commentary on Habakkuk.) The Greek word introducing the quotation is *hóti*, which can mean either “that” or “because.” Translators have commonly rendered the term as “because,” thus presenting the quotation as giving the reason for its being evident that justification does not originate from the Mosaic law.

Paul scripturally identified the sphere out of which justification does come—faith. The Hebrew term rendered “faith” in the Septuagint is *’emunáh*, also meaning “faithfulness,” “steadiness,” “reliability,” or “trustworthiness,” but here evidently having the sense of “trust” or “faith.” The passage in Habakkuk follows a statement regarding the Chaldean, a corporate man that was ruthless, inflated with pride, and acted wickedly, not uprightly, in conducting aggressive campaigns of conquest. During the trying period of the Chaldean heyday, a person would be sustained by his trust in God and his steadfastness in the conviction that the divine promises would be fulfilled. Thus, through his “faith,” the individual would “live.” This “living” would not be a mere existence or a continuance of life, but it would be a meaningful living as one enjoying divine help, blessing, and approval despite the distressing circumstances. (Habakkuk 3:17–19) Accordingly, Paul’s use of the text from Habakkuk is in full harmony with the spirit of the passage.

The part of the passage quoted by Paul reads as follows in extant manuscripts of the Septuagint: “But the righteous one will live by [literally, out of] my faith.” These words establish that the living of the righteous one is by or has its source in faith and, therefore, cannot be linked to the observance of a legal code. By reason of his faith, the believer comes to live in the real sense of the word. He is no longer under condemnation as are those who refuse to put faith in God’s provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. Whereas unbelievers are dead in trespasses and sins, believers are alive—justified, declared guiltless, pronounced righteous. (Compare Ephesians 2:1.)

Galatians 3:12

As to the relationship of faith and the law, Paul added: “But the law is not out of faith.”

Again, as in verse 11, the Greek *δέ* has been variously rendered. It likely is to be understood as contrasting with the previous quotation about faith, and probably means “on the contrary.” This conjunction is, however, missing in the text of P46 (c. 200).

Because of not being “out of faith,” the law does not spring from or have its source or origin in faith. For a person to obey a code of laws, faith is not an essential. It is not dependent on faith, but is solely a matter of following through on what the legal code prescribes. Even a person who had no faith in God or his promises could make an effort to heed the dictates of the law.

In verification of his statement, Paul quoted from Leviticus 18:5, “the one having done them will live in them.” He introduced the quotation with *allá*, an indicator of strong contrast and meaning “but,” “rather,” or “on the contrary.” Thus, Paul contrasted faith with what Scripture says about the law.

The present text of the Septuagint reads, “[the] man having done [them] will live in them,” and the term “man” is also found in certain Greek manuscripts of Galatians 3:12. Thus the condition for living, prospering, or thriving, according to what the law outlined, is works—doing. The individual who would be able to obey the law perfectly would continue to live in the sphere of obedience to the commands contained in the law. Since his life would be dependent upon heeding the requirements of the law, he would be living “in them.” Obedience to the legal precepts would be his life. He could no more continue living without obedience to the legal precepts than he could in an environment lacking needed oxygen.

Note: Instead of simply reading “the one” (as do P46 [c. 200] and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus) many later manuscripts add

ánthropos (man; accordingly, “the man having done them”). The variation, however, does not affect the meaning of Paul’s words, which are quoted from Leviticus 18:5. In the Septuagint, *ánthropos* does appear in the Leviticus passage. Therefore, if *ánthropos* is an addition to the original text of Paul’s letter, possibly the Septuagint reading influenced copyists to include the word.

Galatians 3:13

Regarding what God’s Son accomplished for those under the curse of the Mosaic law because of their inability to keep it perfectly, Paul said: “Christ purchased us [freedom] from the curse of the law.”

The Greek term *exagorázo* basically means “to buy out” and is, in this case, commonly rendered “redeem.” In the Septuagint, this word appears only once. It is used in relation to time and signifies to “gain” time. (Daniel 2:8) While also linked with time at Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5, the expression has the sense of “making the most” of the time or the opportunity, as if “purchasing” it for beneficial use.

Since the law is manifestly the Mosaic law, Paul, when writing “us,” included himself with all others who were subject to its terms. Because of being unable to live up flawlessly to the law’s requirements, all the Jews came under the curse that it prescribed for disobedience.

Christ, by laying down his life sacrificially, bought transgressors of the law freedom from being under its curse. God’s Son, as Paul wrote, “having become a curse for us.” The preposition rendered “for” is *hypér* and has the basic meaning of “over” but may also signify “on behalf of” or “for the sake of.”

Again, establishing his point scripturally, the apostle quoted from Deuteronomy 21:23. He introduced the quotation with the words, “because it is written.” Although *hóti* can denote either “that” or “because,” the apparent meaning here is “because,” pointing to the scriptural reason for what Paul had said previously. The quotation that follows (“Cursed is everyone hanged on a tree” [*xylon*, wood or tree]) differs from extant Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) manuscripts in not referring to the one hanged as accursed of God. Perhaps the apostle chose to omit the reference to God since the beloved, sinless Son of God (in harmony with his Father’s will) took upon himself the curse resting on disobedient ones and, hence, could never be spoken of as divinely accursed.

According to the law, a dead criminal suspended from a tree or pole was regarded as cursed of God. Therefore, no corpse was to remain in this condition as a public warning for a period extending beyond the daylight hours, but was to be buried.

Verses 14-18. Reception of the blessing.

The blessing of justification includes:

- (1) The blessing given to Abraham
- (2) The promise through faith
- (3) The covenanted blessing of an inheritance

The covenant blessing, therefore, is wholly by faith.

Salvation is by faith, plus nothing.

Galatians 3:14

Emphasizing that what Jesus Christ did went beyond benefiting those who were under the law, the apostle continued, “in order that, into the nations, the blessing of Abraham might come to be in Christ Jesus so that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith.”

The introductory *hína* apparently is an indicator of purpose. Jesus’ sacrificial death opened the way for non-Jews to receive the “blessing of Abraham,” evidently the very blessing that the patriarch enjoyed—being justified or counted as righteous by God because of his faith. While believing Jews came to share in the blessing by being liberated from the curse of the law, this blessing was not to be restricted to them but was to be extended to non-Jews who put faith in God’s Son. Paul, therefore, spoke of the blessing as coming to be “in Christ Jesus,” not through adherence to a particular legal code. Only after non-Jews were cleansed from sin by the shed blood of Jesus Christ would God count them as guiltless and recognize them as his approved children.

The apostle again used the word *hína* (so that), pointing to what results to believing Jews and non-Jews because of having the blessing of Abraham extended to them. This result is their receiving the “promise of the spirit.” Since Paul established that both Jews and non-Jews were approved on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, the first person plural verb *lábomen* (“we might receive”) is evidently referring to all believers. By repenting of their sins and accepting the deliverance from sin that God’s Son effected, believing Jews and non-Jews received the spirit.

The apostle used the expression “promise of the spirit.” It is the spirit which God, through his prophets, had promised. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:38, 39; note that the language of Joel’s prophecy is broad enough to include non-Jewish peoples, as is the wording of Peter’s statement made on the day of Pentecost.) Only “through faith” or absolute trust in Jesus Christ—accepting him as God’s Son and the one through whom forgiveness of sin is made possible—did Jews and non-Jews become recipients of God’s spirit, and this proved that they were indeed approved children of God. (Compare Romans 8:14–17.)

Note:

The reading *epangelían* “promise” has the most extensive manuscript support, including the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus. In a number of manuscripts, the oldest being P46 (c. 200), the word is *eulogían* (blessing). Possibly the variation resulted from a scribal repetition of the previous reference to the “blessing [*eulogía*] of Abraham.”

Galatians 3:15

Developing the significance of the “blessing of Abraham,” the apostle continued: “Brothers, I am speaking in human [terms (literally, according to man)], a covenant, though validated by a man, no one nullifies or adds [to it].”

Paul addressed believers as “brothers,” as all of them were “sons of God.” On the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ, they were justified and experienced the new birth through the operation of God’s spirit upon them. Even though the Galatians had been influenced by the persuasive words of false teachers, the apostle still regarded them as his brothers, members of his beloved spiritual family. This indicates that Paul desired to help the Galatians in a spirit of love.

When speaking “according to man,” the apostle drew on an example common to ordinary life. Paul’s objective was to assist the Galatians to recognize the relationship of the Mosaic law to God’s promise to Abraham. In the Greek text, the phrase “though validated by a man” precedes the term covenant (*diathéke*). This emphasizes that a *man-made* formal, solemn agreement is involved.

Still, though ratified merely by a man, the covenant is binding in its originally validated form. The Greek verb for “validate” (*kyróo*) is derived from the noun *kyros*, denoting “power” or “authority.” Hence, the verb means “to invest with power or authority,” “ratify,” “put into effect,” or “confirm.” No individual can unilaterally “nullify” (*athetéō*) a man-made covenant or “add” (*epidiatássomai*) to it. For any valid changes to be made all the parties involved must give their consent. The Greek term *athetéō* commonly has the sense of “nullify” or “set

aside.” It can, however, also signify “reject” or “disregard”—a meaning that would, in this case, not fit the context of the apostle’s words. In the Scriptures, including the Septuagint, the word *epidiatássomai* (*epí*, upon; *diá*, through; *tásso*, arrange, designate, direct, appoint, or set) appears only once and conveys the sense of “add” or “supplement.”

Galatians 3:16

Building on the point he made, Paul continued: “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ as [meaning] many, but as [meaning] one, ‘and to your seed,’ who is Christ.”

The Greek term commonly rendered “now” in this case is *δέ* and has the basic sense of “but.” What follows, though, does not contrast with Paul’s preceding words. Evidently, therefore, the expression *δέ* is to be viewed as pointing to an additional thought and not to a contrasting concept as would the rendering “but.”

Through his representative angel, God (not man) spoke the promises. The plural “promises” harmonizes with the fact that Abraham heard expressions of divine promise on several occasions. (Genesis 12:2, 3, 7; 13:14–17; 15:5–18; 17:1–8; 22:15–18) As formal, solemn expressions of what God would do, the “promises” constituted a divine covenant or agreement with Abraham.

Like the English term “offspring,” the Hebrew word for “seed” (*zéraʿ*) may designate a single individual, or it can be understood as a plural in the collective sense. Paul’s argument focusing on the singular “seed,” not the plural “seeds,” must be understood in the context of the Scriptures as a whole. The manner in which the Scriptures speak of the “seed” indicates that just one “seed” (not many “seeds”) is involved. For example, after Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, only one of these came to be associated with the “seed.” Abraham was told, “through Isaac your seed will be called.” (Genesis 21:12) The Scriptures point to one special seed—the “Anointed One,” the “Messiah,” or the “Christ”—through whom blessings would flow. (Isaiah 11:1–5) Accordingly, Paul’s argument about one seed agrees fully with what is set forth in the Scriptures. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to the special seed—Christ.

Note: Most manuscripts read *hós* (who). The variants *ho* (the one) and *hou* (genitive form of *hós*) found in some manuscripts do not affect the meaning of Paul’s words.

Galatians 3:17

Focusing on the unchangeable aspect of the covenant that God made with Abraham, Paul wrote: “Moreover, this I say, [the] covenant previously validated by God is not invalidated [by] the law [that] came to be 430 years later, making the promise ineffectual.”

A number of modern translations do not include a rendering for the Greek *δέ*, basically meaning “but.” Since what follows this conjunction builds on Paul’s argument, the meaning is not affected by leaving *δέ* untranslated. The conjunction *δέ* appears to have the sense of “further,” “additionally,” “moreover,” and not the meaning of “but.”

The covenant is the one that God concluded with Abraham. Since no one could unilaterally nullify or change a covenant, the introduction of the law had no effect on the Abrahamic covenant and the promise incorporated therein. God’s promise to Abraham continued in force and remained unchanged.

The expression “previously validated” is a rendering of the Greek word *prokyróo* (*pró*, before; *kyróo*, put into effect, ratify, validate, confirm; see also comments on 3:15). While not yet in the land of Canaan, Abraham (Abram) first heard God’s promise: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:2, 3, NIV) When Abraham responded in faith, leaving behind his country and relatives, and later entered Canaan, God confirmed the covenant promise. (Genesis 12:7). Abraham was then 75 years old. (Genesis 12:4)

From that time until the giving of the law a period of 430 years passed, 215 years of which Abraham and his descendants lived in the land of Canaan. (Genesis 12:4–6; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9) During the remaining 215 years, Abraham’s grandson Jacob and his descendants resided in Egypt. This agrees with the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint that the Israelites lived in “Egypt” and “Canaan” 430 years. (Exodus 12:40; the Masoretic Text, however, omits the mention of Canaan.) With seeming reference to Exodus 12:40, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus presents the same chronology: “They [the Israelites] left Egypt in the month of Xanthicus, on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Abraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Jacob removed into Egypt.” (*Antiquities*, Book II, chap. XV, par. 2; Whiston’s translation) The law covenant was concluded with the Israelites in the year they left Egypt. Accordingly, Paul could speak of the law as coming into being 430 years after God made a covenant with Abraham.

Paul's mentioning the passage of so many years may have served to provide additional proof that the law did not "invalidate" (*akyróo*, negative form of *kyróo*) the covenant God made with Abraham. By the time the law was given, the Abrahamic covenant had already existed 430 years.

An integral part of the Abrahamic covenant is the promise that, "in Abraham," all the nations would be blessed and that his seed would be given the land of Canaan. This promise was made before the law covenant came into being and, therefore, the law did not change it. Regarding what the law did not do respecting the promise, Paul used the Greek word *katargéo*, meaning to "cancel," "abolish," "destroy," "render ineffective," or "make useless." This compound consists of *katá* (down) and *argós* (idle), which is a negative adjective form of *érgon* (work).

Note: Many later manuscripts add the words *eis Christón* (into [in] Christ) after "God." These additional words are, however, missing in P46 (c. 200) and the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus, and numerous other manuscripts.

Galatians 3:18

Regarding the inheritance, Paul wrote: "For if out of law the inheritance [is], [it is] not out of a promise, but God has graciously given [it] to Abraham through a promise."

If God's giving of the inheritance had been "out of law" (had its source in scrupulous observance of the Mosaic law), it would have been earned as a right and could not be spoken of as the receipt of a promised gift. The inheritance, however, was not granted on the basis of merit. Moses made this very clear when telling the nation of Israel: "It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to occupy their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations [YHWH] your God is dispossessing them before you, in order to fulfill the promise that [YHWH] made on oath to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." (Deuteronomy 9:5, NRSV) As Moses' words confirm, the inheritance was "out of a promise," having its source in the God-given oath-bound promise.

Abraham did not personally receive a land inheritance. The cave of Machpelah and the surrounding field that he bought for a burial site could not be regarded as such. Still, the patriarch did receive the favour and blessing that the land inheritance represented. Because of his faith, Abraham was granted an approved standing before God, being reckoned as righteous. (Genesis 15:6) This righteous standing, accompanied by divine blessings, was Abraham's precious inheritance. (Compare Psalm 16:5, 6.) It was not something that Abraham

earned. Because the Almighty God promised to bless Abraham, he did so as an expression of “grace” or “favour.” Rightly, then, Paul spoke of the inheritance as being “graciously given to Abraham through a promise.” The Greek term for “graciously given” (*charízomai*) incorporates the noun *cháris*, meaning “favour,” “grace,” or “kindness.”

Note: Most manuscripts read *ek* (out of), whereas P46 (c. 200) says *diá* (through). The basic meaning, however, is conveyed regardless of which preposition appears in the text.

3:19-29. Justification and the purpose of the law

Galatians 3:19

Verse 19a. The question

Verses 19b-29. The answer

Directing attention to the Mosaic law, Paul raised the question: “Why, then, the law?” The interrogative introductory word *tí* means either “why” or “what.” In this case, it is commonly rendered “why,” or “what was the purpose of.” Since there is no verb, the question could also be translated: “What, then, the law?” Rather than focusing on the reason for the law, the question could be understood as referring to the nature or significance of the law.

The apostle provided the answer: “Thanks to transgression it was added until the seed would arrive to whom the promise had been made, and [the law] was enacted through angels at [the] hand of a mediator.”

“Thanks” is a rendering of the Greek word *chárin*, which is related to the noun *cháris*, meaning “favour,” “kindness,” or “grace.” In its basic sense, *chárin* denotes “in favour of” but here apparently signifies “on account of,” “because of,” or “for the sake of.”

The Greek word for “transgression” (*parábasis*) literally means an “aside stepping” (*pará*, beside or aside; *básis*, foot, step, or stepping) or an “overstepping.” For there to be such an “overstepping” or “transgression,” a law, rule, or regulation must exist. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans (4:15, NIV): “Where there is no law there is no transgression.” If no deeds, expressions, and attitudes had existed that, in the light of a legal code, could be called transgressions, the law would have been unnecessary. Paul made this point in his first letter to Timothy (1:9, 10, NAB): “Law is meant not for a righteous person but for the lawless and unruly, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, the unchaste, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound

teaching.” In a sense, the law owed its existence to transgressions, and transgressions owed their existence to the law, which made the Israelites painfully aware of their wrongdoing by identifying it.

In Greek, the word for “add” (*prostíthemi*) literally means “toward [*prós*] to put [*títhemi*].” It here refers to placing something additional alongside the promise made to Abraham. There was no change in the promise but merely an adding of something alongside it.

The Mosaic law was designed to be temporary, continuing in effect “until the seed would arrive.” That “seed” proved to be the promised Messiah or Christ, Jesus. As “heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2), Jesus Christ is the one “to whom the promise had been made.” (In Greek, the expression “promise had been made” is one verb, *epéngeltai*, meaning “has been promised.”) In fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Jesus Christ is the heir and the seed through whom people of all nations would be blessed. (Genesis 22:18)

Both angels and a mediator were involved in the giving of the law. In connection with the role of angels, the Greek verb used is *diatásso* (*diá*, through; *tásso*, arrange, order, or appoint), meaning “give instructions,” “order,” “command,” “assign,” “arrange,” “ordain,” or “enact.” The context lends itself to the sense of “ordain” or “enact.” Angels are not portrayed as the originators of the law but as the instrumentalities “through” whom it was put into effect, ordained, or enacted.

The Exodus account implies that angelic ministration was involved in giving the law to the Israelites. When God first revealed himself to Moses in the wilderness of the Mount Sinai region, an angel did the speaking. “The angel of Yahweh appeared to [Moses] in a flame blazing from the middle of a bush.” (Exodus 3:2, NJB). Thereafter, the words of the angel are represented as those of YHWH. Since the initial revelation involved an angel, it follows that God’s later communication at Mount Sinai, where the law was given, occurred through his representative angel. Accordingly, Paul’s words about the enactment of the law “through angels” agree with the record contained in Exodus.

The enactment of the law was not limited to the participation of angels. A human instrumentality played a significant role. As the apostle added, “at [*en*] hand of a mediator.” Here the preposition *en* (in) evidently has the sense of “at” or “by,” and so the expression “at hand” apparently means “through the instrumentality of.” The Greek word for “mediator,” “go-between,” “arbitrator,” or “umpire” (*mesítes*) is drawn from the verb *mesíteúo*, meaning “to bring about an agreement.” *Mesíteúo* can also signify or include the idea of “guarantee” or “confirm” (as appears to be the case in its sole occurrence in the Scriptures [Hebrews 6:17]). Moses was the mediator at or by whose hand the law was

enacted. The Biblical record states: “Moses went and told the people all Yahweh’s words and all the laws, and all the people answered with one voice, ‘All the words Yahweh has spoken we will carry out!’ Moses put all Yahweh’s words into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent certain young Israelites to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice bullocks to Yahweh as communion sacrifices. Moses then took half the blood and put it into basins, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then, taking the Book of the Covenant, he read it to the listening people, who then said, ‘We shall do everything that Yahweh has said; we shall obey.’ Moses then took the blood and sprinkled it over the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you, entailing all these stipulations.’” (Exodus 24:3–8, NJB)

Notes:

The best manuscript evidence supports the reading *parabáseon* (transgressions). A few manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200), read *práxeon* (deeds, practices, or acts). The reading *paradóseon* (traditions) in one sixth-century manuscript is manifestly a copyist’s error.

The majority of manuscripts have the word *hou* (which) after *áchris* (until). In the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and a few other manuscripts, the word is *án*, which, in this context, would have the sense of “whenever.” The variation has little bearing on the significance of Paul’s words.

Galatians 3:20

Pointing to the distinct difference between the law and the promise made to Abraham, Paul wrote: “The mediator, however, is not of one, but God is one.” The apostle here stated the general principle that there is no mediator for just one entity. A mediator functions only for more than one party. In the case of the law covenant, Moses served as the mediator between God (represented by angelic ministration) and the nation of Israel, and the people obligated themselves to observe the terms of the covenant. When the Almighty gave his covenant promise to Abraham, however, there was no mediator. God dealt with Abraham directly, apart from any human instrumentality.

Whereas the law covenant required strict obedience from the Israelites in order for them to become recipients of the promised blessings, the covenant promise given to Abraham had no such stipulation attached. So no one could make any changes at a later time that would require the performance of certain works in order to earn the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed. Not even the mediator Moses could introduce changes.

It was the Most High who used the mediator Moses in concluding a covenant with Abraham's descendants 430 years after his giving the covenant promise to their forefather. Since the Almighty God would not be working at cross-purposes with himself, the law covenant did not in any way alter the promise made to Abraham. Instead, the law covenant served a special purpose for a specific time.

Galatians 3:21

To counteract any wrong conclusion about the Mosaic law, Paul wrote: "[Is] the law, therefore, against the promises of God? May it not happen."

All who seek to live up to the law cannot do so flawlessly. Hence, they stand as disapproved before God and are condemned as undeserving of life. This is the negative aspect of the Mosaic law that Paul had previously stressed in his letter. Some readers or hearers of the apostle's words, therefore, could have wrongly reasoned that the law actually stood in opposition to God's promises made to Abraham. Evidently anticipating this possibility, Paul raised the question about whether the law was "against the promises of God."

The apostle then answered this question with the Greek expression *mé* (not) *génoito* (may it happen). Being in the optative mood, *génoito* (form of *gínomai* [happen, occur, take place, become, or come to be]) implies a wish or desire. Consequently, a literal translation of the expression *mé génoito* would be, "may it not happen." In the Septuagint, the words *mé génoito* are sometimes found as a rendering of the Hebrew *chalíláh*, which is a strong negative interjection conveying the sense of "far be it from," or "it is unthinkable." (Genesis 44:7, 17; Joshua 22:29; 24:16; 1 Kings 21:3 [20:3 LXX]). As in Paul's earlier use of the expression *mé génoito* (2:17), it may be understood as signifying "perish the thought."

By next calling attention to what the law could not do, the apostle showed that it did not contradict God's promises, the fulfillment of which did not depend upon scrupulous observance of a legal code. "For if a law had been given that could impart life, indeed out of law righteousness would be." Here the conjunction *gár* (for) functions as an indicator of reason, introducing why the law could not be "against the promises of God."

Any giving or bestowing of life falls outside the scope of law. As to the Mosaic law, it delineated what was divinely approved and disapproved. Since sinful humans could not live up to its requirements perfectly, they were exposed as condemned sinners, undeserving of life. Unable to effect a person's having a righteous standing with God, the Mosaic law never had as its purpose to grant life to any sinful human. Because life is dependent on being righteous from the

divine standpoint, a law that could impart life (*zoopoiéo*, make alive [*zoé*, life; *poiéo*, make]) would of necessity have to be the source of a person's ceasing to be a sinful human. If such a law had been given, righteousness (as Paul said) would have been "out of" or from that law.

Notes:

The words *toú theou* ("of God") after *epangelión* (promises) are missing in P46 (c. 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus. They are, however, found in the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and most other manuscripts.

Instead of *óntos* (really, certainly, or indeed), two ninth-century manuscripts read *alétheia* (truth). The variation is insignificant, as the words "truth" and "certainty" express the same basic thought.

Instead of *ek* (out of), found in most manuscripts, P46 (c. 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus read *en* (in). The order of the next three words, however, is not the same in both manuscripts. Still different is the word order in the Majority text (represented primarily by Byzantine manuscripts). Nevertheless, these variations do not affect the basic meaning of Paul's words.

Galatians 3:22

Drawing a sharp contrast, the apostle continued: "But the Scripture shut up all under sin." In this case, the introductory Greek word for "but" is *allá*, which is more emphatic in pointing to a contrast than is *dé* (also meaning "but"). The term *allá* may denote "instead," or "on the contrary."

"Scripture" (*graphé*, from *grápho* [to write]) apparently includes the Mosaic law, which is a significant part of the sacred writings. Paul evidently personified "Scripture," attributing to it what the divine Author of "the Scripture" had actually done.

The expression "shut up" is *synkleío* (*syn*, with or together; *kleío*, shut, close, lock, or bar). In the context of Paul's words, the prefix *syn* may have an intensifying sense rather than the literal meaning of "with" or "together." Besides numerous occurrences in the Septuagint, the term *synkleío* appears only four times in the Scriptures. (Luke 5:6; Romans 11:32; Galatians 3:22, 23) Based on its use in the Septuagint and the four other occurrences, *synkleío* can denote "enclose [fish in a net]," "confine," "hem in," "trap," "shut," and "close."

The words "under sin" evidently signify being "subject to" or "under the power of sin." All find themselves in this condition. While the Greek word for "all" is a neuter pronominal plural adjective in this case, the context indicates that the

application is to persons, not to things. The neuter case appears to indicate that “all” is general, leaving no room for any exceptions.

In revealing that it is impossible for imperfect humans to gain divine approval by trying to live up to a legal code, Scripture completely “shut up all under sin.” Instead of opening up the possibility of gaining a righteous standing before God and, hence, life, Scripture assigned all those under the law to the helpless state of confinement or imprisonment to sin, with death in view.

Presenting the reason for what Scripture did, Paul continued, “in order that, out of faith of Jesus Christ, the promise can be given to the ones having faith.” Since all were confined to the power of sin, this revealed that the receipt of everything included in the promise had its source in faith. No one could obtain the promised blessings by any means other than the basis on which Abraham was originally given the promise. In Abraham’s case, this basis was faith.

The genitive construction—“faith of Jesus Christ”—is not to be understood as faith belonging to Jesus Christ. Instead, it is the faith that has him as its object. This faith is an unqualified trust in him and what he accomplished by dying sacrificially for sinful humans. All those putting their faith in Jesus Christ are given the promise, that is, they share in what the promise embraces—a righteous standing before God and all the blessings this makes possible, both present and future.

Galatians 3:23

Explaining what the law did, Paul continued: “But before the faith came, under law we were guarded, shut up, for the faith destined to be revealed.”

The coming or arrival of the faith was when Jesus appeared as the promised Messiah or Christ. It was then possible, through faith in him and his sacrifice, to be declared righteous or guiltless. Before the arrival of this faith, law (evidently meaning the Mosaic law) served a specific purpose. With reference to that purpose, the apostle used the Greek term *phroureo*, meaning “keep watch over,” “hold prisoner,” “confine,” or “hold in custody.” Thus, the function of the Mosaic law was comparable to that of a jailer on guard duty. Besides “guarding” or “keeping watch over” those under its control, the law also “confined” (*synkleio*; see comments on 3:22) them, not granting any release from its unyielding requirements.

The Greek preposition *eis*, which starts the phrase about the revealing of the faith, usually means “into.” It can, however, also denote “to” or “till” when the reference is to time (Matthew 24:13; 2 Timothy 1:12), or “for,” as in the expressions “for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19) and “for the defense” (Philippians

1:16). Since Paul's emphasis seems to have been on the purpose or reason for the law, rather than on time (until), *eis* is probably to be understood as meaning "for." Accordingly, the law's "guarding" and "confining" served "for the faith destined [*méllo*, be about] to be revealed."

At the time the law was given, the faith (centering on Christ and his sacrifice) had not yet been "revealed," "uncovered," or "unveiled." The revealing of that faith, however, was "going" to come. There was no uncertainty about its arrival. Thus, while the faith had not yet been revealed, the law had fulfilled its work "for" this faith, preparing individuals to embrace the freedom made possible through it. The law's guarding, coupled with its confining, was of such a nature that rightly inclined ones would have longed for the time when they could be righteous from God's standpoint, liberated from all feelings of guilt and unworthiness.

Note: Variations in the form of the verb *synkleío* (shut up, confine)—*synkleiómenoi* and *synkekleisménoi*—convey a slightly different meaning. The participle *synkleiómenoi*, (which is the reading of P46 [c. 200], fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and other ancient manuscripts) expresses a continuing action. On the other hand, *synkekleisménoi* (found in many more recent manuscripts) is indicative of completed action.

Galatians 3:24

With reference to the law, Paul continued: "Therefore, the law has become our pedagogue for Christ so that out of faith we might be justified."

In the first century, the "pedagogue" (*paidagogós*), "tutor," or "guide" commonly was a slave. His assignment was to supervise the conduct of a child and to administer needful discipline. Instead of doing the actual teaching, the pedagogue took the child to the instructor. Similarly, the Mosaic law, with its penalties for wrongdoing, functioned as a strict disciplinarian and prepared those who responded properly to accept Jesus Christ as the one who could release them from the law and its consequences for disobedience. Focusing on the function of the "pedagogue," translators have variously rendered the apostle's words, "the law was our disciplinarian" (NRSV), "the law was thus put in charge of us" (REB), and "the law was serving as a slave to look after us" (NJB).

The Greek preposition preceding Christ is *eis*, basically meaning "into." It can also mean "to," "until," or "for," and translators vary in their renderings. A number of modern translations emphasize the time element—"until Christ." Others render the preposition as "to" and "for." Since the result to which Paul

pointed (“so that out of faith we might be justified”) does not focus on the time element, “until” does not appear to be the preferable rendering of *eis*. While “to” is an acceptable meaning, it requires the addition of “to lead,” and Paul’s words do not stress Christ’s role as teacher. The thought expressed is not that of a pedagogue leading individuals to the real teacher—Christ. Accordingly, “for” may convey the best sense. The law served “for” Christ. Its intent, purpose, or objective was to point to him.

Persons who were fully convinced of their sin and the hopelessness of being divinely approved through personal effort or merit were moved to embrace the only means for gaining the righteous standing with God that they so greatly desired. Their being “justified” or declared “guiltless” would be “out of faith,” or would have its source in faith. By putting their full faith or trust in or reliance on Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sin made possible through his sacrificial death, they were justified or put right with God.

Note: The majority of manuscripts support the reading *gégonen* (has come to be, has become), whereas P46 (c. 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus read *egéneto* (came to be, became).

Galatians 3:25

The role of the pedagogue is temporary. Calling attention to this fact, Paul noted: “Now [that] the faith has arrived, we are no longer under a pedagogue.” The arrival of the faith is to be linked with the coming of Jesus as the promised Messiah or Christ. He is the object of this faith or unqualified trust. As soon as individuals could be justified by their faith in Jesus Christ, the law had served its purpose. It was no longer needed as a strict supervisor and disciplinarian, convincing those under its guidance of their guilt and utter helplessness with reference to meriting divine favour. A pedagogue (as was the law) suited the needs of children, but did not have a place in the lives of responsible adult sons.

Galatians 3:26

Pointing to the relationship with God that had been made possible through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul wrote: “For you are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus.” The conjunction *gár* (for) introduces a reason for not being under a pedagogue, which reason is that believers enjoy the standing of fully responsible, approved “sons of God.” Instead of remaining condemned sinners, all (not just a few or a select group) who put faith in Jesus Christ are forgiven of their sins and granted this noble standing. The “faith” of these believers is an absolute trust in Jesus Christ and the value of his sacrifice applied in their behalf.

Notes:

In P46 (c. 200) the definite article *tés* is missing, but it is to be found in other ancient manuscripts. Its inclusion or omission, however, is immaterial to the meaning of the text.

Instead of *en Christó Iesoú* (in Christ Jesus) supported by the majority of ancient manuscripts, P46 (c. 200) reads *Christoú Iesoú* (“of Christ Jesus”). The expression *písteos* (faith) *Christoú Iesoú* denotes the faith that has Christ Jesus as its object and, therefore, does not differ significantly from the reading “faith in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:27

Regarding these “sons of God,” the apostle continued: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The plural Greek word *hósoi* may be translated “all” or “as many as.” Since the Greek verb for “baptized” is a second person plural, *hósoi* is restricted to those addressed, requiring the rendering “all of you,” or “as many of you.” Water baptism or immersion is the outward symbol of baptism into Christ. To be baptized into Christ signifies becoming part of his congregational body, being incorporated with all the other sons of God into a unity with Christ as head.

The Greek term *endyo* means “to put on,” or “to clothe.” All who are “baptized into Christ” “put on” or “clothe” themselves with Christ in the sense that they reflect what he is. They take on the characteristics and the standing of Jesus Christ. As he is the Son of God, so they are sons of God. In attitude, speech, and conduct, they are like Jesus Christ. Thus, the conjunction *gár* (for) serves to introduce why all having genuine faith in Jesus Christ are sons of God. The reason is: they have “put on Christ.”

Galatians 3:28

Pointing to what all believers enjoy, Paul wrote: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is not male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

In connection with rights and privileges in the first century, a tremendous gulf separated Jew from Greek, slave from freeman, and male from female. These fleshly distinctions resulted in marked inequality.

At the temple in Jerusalem, uncircumcised non-Jews (Greeks being representative of this group) were not permitted to pass through the openings in the stone barrier that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Women. While Israelite women could go beyond the stone barrier, they were

prohibited from entering the Court of Israel. Only ceremonially clean males could do so.

In the Roman world, the slave was regarded as a thing, not as a person. His master had absolute control over him and could treat him as he pleased.

Paul's words, however, emphasize that fleshly distinctions had absolutely no bearing on the spiritual standing the individual could enjoy. Race, social condition, and sex were no barrier to a person's becoming a full-fledged son of God. In the spiritual family, there are not two distinctly different kinds of children—male *and* female. All are “sons of God.” Accordingly, as the apostle wrote, “there is not male and female.” Unlike the two previous combinations, which are joined by a contrasting *oudé* (meaning “nor” in this case), the terms “male” and “female” are linked by *kaí* (and).

The weight of manuscript evidence favours *heis*, the masculine form of the Greek word for “one.” This is indicative of one corporate whole, or one person. Genuine believers are “one in Christ Jesus,” inseparably united to him as their head. Because of their forming a corporate whole, all enjoy spiritual equality. There are no second-rate sons of God. All have been made part of Christ's body in the same manner.

Notes:

Pántes (all) has the support of most ancient manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200). Codex Sinaiticus, a later alteration in fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, however, read *hápantes* (all, possibly an intensified form).

P46 (c. 200) reads *hymeís este Christouí* (you are of Christ), meaning “you belong to Christ.” While a few manuscripts have the neuter form for “one” (*hen*), the majority include the masculine plural form *heis* and read, *hymeís heís este en Christó Iesou* (you are one in Christ Jesus).

Galatians 3:29

Identifying the true seed of Abraham, Paul continued: “But if you are Christ's, you are indeed Abraham's seed, heirs according to [the] promise.” As the apostle had shown earlier, the seed of Abraham is Christ (3:16). So all who belong to Christ—those whom he acknowledges as his own and incorporated into his body—are part of Abraham's seed. By reason of their faith in God's Son, the Galatian believers became true children of Abraham. Therefore, they were in line to inherit everything that is embraced in the promise made to Abraham (3:7). No legalistic keeping of the law had put the Galatian believers in

the position of heirs. As the apostle expressed it, their being heirs was “according to the promise.”



The gymnasium in Sardis

Galatians, chapter 4

(From the King James Version 1611)

- 1: Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;
2: But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.
3: Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:
4: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.
8: Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.
9: But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

10: Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.
11: I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.
12: Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.
13: Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
14: And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.
15: Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.
16: Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?
17: They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.
18: But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.
19: My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,
20: I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.
21: Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?
22: For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.
23: But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.
24: Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.
25: For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.
26: But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.
27: For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.
28: Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.
29: But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.
30: Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.
31: So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Chapter 4

4:1-7. Justification and sonship

Verses 1-3. Sons under faith vs. servants under the law

Galatians 4:1

Further emphasizing the changed status of full sonship, Paul wrote: “Now I say [that for] whatever time the heir is a babe, he differs [in] nothing [from] a slave, [though] being lord of all [things].”

In this case, the Greek conjunction *δέ* (but) apparently does not introduce a contrast and so may be translated “now.” The word links what the apostle said before with another illustration of the same basic point.

As evident from the context, the term “babe” (*νήπιος*) is not limited to the brief period of infancy. Instead, it describes the state of the heir during the entire period of his minority. While a minor, the heir is treated as a subordinate. In this respect, he differs in nothing from a slave or bondservant (*δούλος*). By reason of his being the heir, the minor is “lord” or “owner” of “everything” (plural of the Greek *πᾶς*, all). Nevertheless, as a minor, he is not permitted to exercise the authority of an owner or lord.

Galatians 4:2

Paul continued: “But he is under guardians and stewards until the time set by the father.” The conjunction “but” (*ἀλλά*) indicates a strong contrast. Slaves commonly filled the positions of guardians and stewards. Therefore, the heir, though lord, is actually subservient to slaves. In view of the tremendous contrast between the state of lordship and that of subordination, the conjunction *ἀλλά* is most appropriate.

“Guardian” translates the Greek term *ἐπίτροπος* (*ἐπί*, [upon] and *τρέπο*, [turn or direct]). The basic meaning of this word suggests that the “guardians” had the authority to direct and guide the minor. “Stewards,” on the other hand, were “house administrators,” caring for the property or the estate. The Greek term for steward (*οἰκονόμος*) is a compound of *οἶκος* (house) and *νόμος* (law). Accordingly, both as to his person and his inheritance, the heir could not exercise independent authority until the time that his father had previously set.

Evidently the apostle’s illustration was based on a legal arrangement with which the Galatians were familiar. The father had the authority to determine just when the son would be old enough to assume the full responsibilities of an adult and the management of the inheritance. The Greek word having the sense of “time

set” is *prothesmía* (before appointed; *pró* [before] and *títhemi* [appoint, set, place, put, ordain, establish]) and refers to a time fixed in advance.

Galatians 4:3

Applying the illustration, Paul wrote: “Thus, also we, when we were babes, were enslaved to the elements of the world.” In view of the apostle’s previous reference to the Mosaic law, the word “we” (*hemeís*) evidently is to be understood as referring to him and his fellow Jews. While “babes,” or in their minority, they did not enjoy the dignified status of adult sons. Instead, they were subject “to the elements of the world.” Commonly rendered “to,” the preposition *hypo* (under) points to being under authority.

The Greek word for “element” (*stoicheíon*) appears to designate something that is a part of a row or series. A related term (*stoíchos*) denotes “row” and is drawn from the verb *steícho*, meaning “to march in line.” The expression *stoicheíon* was used to designate the letters of the alphabet and those which formed a word. Thus, the plural of *stoicheíon* conveys the thought of “rudiments,” “elements,” or the “ABCs.” The Mosaic law, with its focus on animal sacrifices and a material altar and sanctuary, belonged to the “world” (*kósmos*; see Hebrews 9:1, where the adjective *kosmikós* [worldly] is used with reference to the material sanctuary).

Under the law arrangement, the Jews were treated as minors, subject to the ABCs or only the basic elements of the fullness of the truth that was to be revealed through Jesus Christ. (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1) Since the law was binding, the apostle could speak of being in servitude or “enslaved” to the “elements of the world.” The state of servitude contrasts sharply with that of full freedom as sons.

Note: Manuscripts vary in using either *hémen* (we were; active voice) or *hémetha* (we were; middle voice, indicative of sharing in the results of the action). This difference does not affect translation.

Verses 4-7. Sonship by redemption from the law

Galatians 4:4

Pointing to the time for the change from a condition of enslavement to freedom, Paul continued: “When, however, the fullness of the time came, God sent his Son, [who] came to be out of a woman [and] under law.”

The “fullness of the time” designates the time determined beforehand by God for the sending of his Son to the earth. When Jesus Christ arrived on the earthly scene, the Jews were awaiting the Messiah (Luke 3:15), suggesting that the

prophecy of Daniel, with its specific time features, may have provided the basis for their expectation. (Daniel 9:25, 26) With the coming of God's Son to the earth, no more time needed to pass. The allotted time for waiting in the state of minority was completely "filled up." While on earth, Jesus was fully a man, for he came to be out of a woman, Mary. As the son of Mary, he was a born Jew and subject to the Mosaic law.

Galatians 4:5

Commenting on what Jesus was able to accomplish by reason of being "out of a woman" and "under law," Paul added, "in order that he might redeem those under law so that we might receive the sonship."

The apostle used *hína* twice. This conjunction initially introduces the purpose for Jesus' coming to be "out of a woman" and "under law," and so has the sense of "in order that." The second occurrence points to the result of the redemption (the receiving of sonship) and thus can appropriately be rendered "so that" or "that." As evident from the context, the law is the Mosaic law and, therefore, those under it or subject to its requirements were the Jews. As a perfect man under the law, Jesus flawlessly lived up to it. So he could take upon himself the penalty for disobedience—death—and thereby purchase freedom for those who were under the condemnation of the law. The Greek word *exagorázo*, commonly rendered "redeem," literally means to "buy out." Bound by the law and yet condemned by it as sinners unable to live up to its requirements, the Jews found themselves in a hopeless state of slavery. (John 8:34) By dying sacrificially in the place of condemned sinners, Jesus Christ bought them out of this state of slavery. Nevertheless, only those who responded in faith to this loving provision benefited. (John 8:31, 32, 35, 36)

Sonship was granted to those who accepted Jesus as the Son of God who died sacrificially for them. When using the first person plural verb *apolábomen*, meaning "we might receive," Paul doubtless meant to include both Jewish and non-Jewish believers, not limiting the bestowal of sonship to those who had been "under law." The Greek word for "sonship" is *huiiothesía* and signifies an "adoption as son."

Galatians 4:6

Focusing on sonship, the apostle continued: "Now that you are sons, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father.'"

The Greek word *δέ* (often meaning "but") is not introducing a contrast. Since the apostle is building on the point about sonship, the word "now" is an appropriate rendering.

In Greek, the term *hóti* can denote either “that” or “because.” Rendering *hóti* as “that” points to the receiving of the Son’s spirit as a proof of sonship, whereas translating the term as “because” indicates the reason for receiving that spirit. A number of modern translations are explicit in conveying the sense of proof. “As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts.” (NAB; see also REB and TEV.) Other translations, however, render *hóti* as “because.” Since, however, the apostle already established that believers have been adopted as sons, the preferable meaning for *hóti* appears to be “that.”

As the Christ and the Son of God, Jesus possessed the fullness of his Father’s spirit. In fulfilment of Isaiah 61:1, God’s spirit was upon him, and the miracles Jesus performed proved that he was indeed the Son of God. (Matt. 12:28; John 5:36; 10:37, 38). Because of his having the spirit of his Father in all its fullness, that spirit belongs to him. Thus, believers can be spoken of as having the spirit of God’s Son sent into their hearts.

The “heart” is representative of the deep inner self. Since the spirit has profoundly influenced the inmost self of believers, establishing their identity as God’s sons, it is the compelling power behind the outcry, “Abba, Father.” Jesus Christ is quoted as using this very expression when praying with great intensity on the final night of his earthly life. (Mark 14:36)

The transliterated Semitic designation appearing in the Greek text, *abbá*, means “father.” It imitates one of the first, simple sounds a baby makes and therefore can convey the intimacy, submission, trust, and affection of a young child when saying “papa” or “daddy.” The word *abbá* is followed by *ho patér* (literally “the Father”). Since the words *ho patér* are evidently not added to explain the meaning of *abbá*, the expression may be regarded as vocative and so could be rendered “O Father.” The designation “Father” could appropriately express the believer’s relationship to God as a son and the privileges and responsibilities associated therewith.

Notes:

Though missing in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, the words *ho theós* are found in nearly all other extant Greek manuscripts.

In P46 (c. 200), the words *toú huiou* (of the Son) are missing. Because of the preponderance of other manuscript evidence, however, there is reason to believe that the words are part of the original text.

The oldest manuscripts (P46, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Alexandrinus) support the reading *hemón* (our), whereas the majority of more recent manuscripts read *hymon* (your).

Galatians 4:7

Focusing on sonship, Paul continued: “Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son; and since a son, also an heir through God.” The apostle initially addressed the Galatian believers collectively, using the second person plural verb *este* (in verse 6), meaning “you are.” Then, evidently drawing attention to the individual standing of the believer, Paul employed the second person singular verb *ei* (you are), the singular “slave” or “bondservant” (*doúlos*), and the singular “son” (*huiós*). Upon becoming believers both Jews and non-Jews were set free from enslavement to sin and an arrangement of servitude to rules and regulations. Hence, the individual believer is “no longer” or “not still” (*oukéti*, a term indicating that what has been the case up to a certain point is so no longer) a slave. The great contrast between the position of slave and son is suggested by the word “but” (*allá*, a stronger term of contrast than *dé*, which also can be translated “but”).

The coordinating conjunction *hóste* (therefore, as a result of, or accordingly) links what Paul wrote about the sending of the spirit into the heart and the resultant outcry, “Abba, Father.” That outcry undeniably establishes the status of the believer.

Paul’s next statement builds on what sonship includes. Because there is no indication of contrast, the coordinating conjunction *dé* (but) here evidently means “and” or “now,” not “but.” In view of the apostle’s reference to the status of “son” as a fact, the word *ei* apparently does not have the conditional sense of possibility (if) but is to be understood as meaning “since.” A son, not a slave, customarily received the inheritance. So, because of being a son, the believer is also an heir, entitled to all the rights and privileges associated with the covenant promise made to Abraham.

According to the earliest manuscript evidence, being an heir is “through God.” It is the Father who has accepted the believer as his Son and thus also constituted the individual as an heir. (Note also the seeming link to verse 2, where the reference is to the “time set by the father.”)

Notes:

The majority of manuscripts read *ei* (you are), but two ninth-century manuscripts omit this word.

Among the manuscripts attesting the words *kleronómos diá theou* (“heir through God”) are P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, the original reading of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. Many later manuscripts read *kleronómos theou diá Christou*

(“heir of God through Christ”). Other variants found in manuscripts include *kleronómos mén theού synkleronómos dé Christou* (heir indeed of God, but fellow heir of Christ [much like Romans 8:17]), *kleronómos diá theón* (heir because of God), *kleronómos diá Christou* (“heir through Christ”), and *kleronómos theού diá Iseού Christou* (“heir of God through Jesus Christ”).

4:8-18. Justification and freedom

Verses 8-14. Losing our liberty in Christ

Galatians 4:8

Directing his attention to the non-Jewish believers, Paul wrote: “But then, indeed, not knowing God, you slaved for those who by nature are not gods.” The coordinating conjunction *allá* (but) points to the great contrast between the condition of sonship and the former state of not even knowing God. In this case, the Greek word for “know” is *oída* (perceive, recognize, or know), not *ginósko*, which can include the sense of having a relationship with someone. To the non-Jews, the true God was completely unknown and unrecognized. (The Greek particle *mén* [indeed, in fact] apparently serves to emphasize their former condition of being without knowledge of the true God.) Their gods, on the other hand, were mere figments of human imagination—unrealities. These deities were by “nature” (*physis*) or in actuality no gods. Therefore, when conforming to the humanly prescribed rituals that honored nonexistent deities, the Galatians had slaved for those who were no gods at all.

Galatians 4:9

Developing his point further, Paul appealed to the Galatians’ sense of reasoning: “But [*dé*] now [*nyn*] having come to know God—or [*dé*] rather having come to be known by God—how can you again turn to the weak and poor elements to which you are again willing to be enslaved anew?”

The conjunction *dé* (but) introduces a contrast to the former state of ignorance, whereas *nyn* (“now”) points to the existing condition of knowing God. Although the expressions *oída* and *ginósko* both mean “know” and can be employed synonymously (see John 8:55), Paul’s use of *ginósko* may be significant, as this term can include (though not necessarily) the thought of relationship with someone. (Matthew 7:23; compare Acts 19:15, where no relationship is implied by the word *ginósko*.) The Galatians had indeed come to know God as the “living and true God” and as their Father. This, however, occurred because God drew them to himself through Christ on the basis of his Son’s sacrifice. (John 6:44; Titus 2:11–14) Therefore, the apostle evidently clarified his initial statement, introducing the point about the Galatians having come to be known

by God with the words *mállon dé* (rather but). It was not the Galatians who had taken the initiative in coming to know God. Only through his favor did they receive his recognition as sons. The fact that the Galatians had come to be known by the living and true God made it even more serious for them to return to the kind of slavery to which they had been subject when serving nonexistent gods according to humanly devised regulations and ceremonies.

As in verse 3, the “elements,” “rudiments,” or “ABCs” evidently designate the legal requirements of the law. While the Galatians had never been in servitude to the Mosaic law, they did observe certain prescribed ordinances and rituals to gain the favour of nonexistent gods. Thus, when willingly taking upon themselves a yoke of servitude to an unyielding law in an effort to have God’s approval, they would have been returning to an arrangement similar to the one that they had formerly abandoned. It is no wonder, therefore, that the apostle raised the question of how they could do this—and *willingly* at that.

Paul described the “elements” as “weak and poor.” They were weak in the sense of being completely ineffectual, inadequate, and powerless with reference to gaining a righteous standing before God. These elements were also “poor,” destitute of any potential for supplying true spiritual riches and blessings. The Greek word for poor (*ptochós*) is descriptive of extreme poverty. Although having enjoyed a state of freedom, the Galatians were willing to become enslaved anew to valueless “elements.”

Galatians 4:10

Focusing on the ritualistic aspect of the enslavement, Paul wrote: “You are observing days and months and times and years.” The Greek word for “observing” is *parateréo*, an intensified form of *teréo*. Combined with *pará* (beside), *teréo* is indicative of a careful or close watching, the object of the watching or observing being in the proximity. Accordingly, the Galatians were closely, carefully, or scrupulously observing days, months, times, and years. They did so with the objective of gaining divine approval.

Having willingly placed themselves under the yoke of the Mosaic law, the Galatians evidently adopted the seventh day as the Sabbath. Because the first day of each Jewish month was a festival day (the new-moon festival), they doubtless made this a day of special observance and thus kept months.

The Greek word for “time” (*kairós*) also means “season.” Under the Mosaic law, the prescribed three annual festivals were closely associated with the seasons. Passover and the subsequent festival of unleavened bread came in early spring, at the start of the barley harvest. Pentecost or the festival of weeks coincided with the beginning of the wheat harvest in late spring. The festival of

booths was celebrated in the fall, at the end of the major part of the agricultural year. By then, grapes, dates, and figs had usually been harvested. The “seasons” the Galatians observed apparently are to be linked to the Jewish festivals.

Insufficient time had passed between Paul’s visit and the writing of the letter for the Galatians to have kept “years.” Nevertheless, their willingness to submit to the law indicated that they would be treating certain years as special.

In itself, there was nothing improper about keeping the Sabbath or other days prescribed by the Mosaic law. Obligatory observance of special days with a view to gaining divine approval, however, was wrong, as it constituted a denial of the truth that faith in Jesus Christ was the sole basis for attaining an approved standing before God.

Galatians 4:11

In view of the spiritually hurtful developments among the Galatians, Paul said: “I fear for you, that somehow I have labored in vain for you.” The apostle was afraid or filled with apprehension. In Greek, the word “you” is in the accusative case and, in combination with the verb, could be rendered, “I am afraid of you.” This, however, evidently is not the sense of the Greek. Paul was not afraid of the Galatians but feared on their account or for them. His concern was for their spiritual welfare. The Greek verb for “labor” (*kopiáo*) can signify “hard work” or “toil.” In the Septuagint, this term often has the sense of wearying or exhausting labouring. The preposition *eis* (into [but here having the sense of “for”]) indicates that the Galatians were the object of Paul’s efforts. Despite his diligent efforts, the danger existed that he had expended himself fully on their behalf “in vain” or for nothing. By adopting a perversion of the evangel, the Galatians would experience spiritual harm, counteracting the wholesome effect of Paul’s labors for them.

Galatians 4:12

Paul appealed to the Galatians: “Brothers, I implore you, become as I [am], because I also [am] as you [are]. You did not wrong me.” In the Greek text, the words, “brothers, I implore you,” do not appear at the start of the sentence. Since, however, the words that follow do not constitute a request, the beseeching evidently relates to the preceding plea, “become as I [am]...” Even though the Galatians had erred seriously, the apostle still regarded them as his brothers and, hence, fellow sons of God.

The Greek word for “implore” (*déomai*) often implies an urgent petitioning on account of need. In view of his great apprehension for them, Paul begged the Galatians to take corrective action. His plea evidently was that they become as

he then was—free from scrupulous law observance in an impossible effort thereby to prove himself righteous before God. The apostle understood fully what it meant to be under the yoke of the law and the contrasting state of freedom as a son of God, justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Because verbs are missing in the Greek text, translators commonly insert present tense English verbs, representing Paul as saying that he, though a Jew, was like the non-Jewish Galatians in not being subject to the requirements of the Mosaic law. Since, however, the Galatians had willingly placed themselves under the law, perhaps Paul was referring to a past situation. Kenneth Wuest, for example, translated the apostle's words, "because I also became as you were." According to this rendering, the apostle became free of the law as had been the case with the non-Jewish Galatians before they yielded to the influence of false teachers. Still another possibility is that Paul could be saying that he used to be what the Galatians had become by willingly submitting themselves to the law, requiring that they heed his appeal to change and again become free of the law as he was.

Seemingly, with reference to the past, Paul said of the Galatians, "You did not wrong me." The Greek verb for "do wrong" is *adikéo*, which may also be defined as "treat wrongly" or "unjustly." This may mean that the Galatians had not wronged the apostle in the past, but treated him with the greatest kindness. In harmony with their past noble spirit, he supplicated them again to become as he was. Perhaps Paul meant to imply that, although the Galatians had not treated him in the wrong way formerly, they then did so or should not do so. Another possibility is that the Galatians were hurting themselves, not the apostle. If the reference to the past ("You did not wrong me") implies that the attitude of the Galatians had changed toward the apostle, it appears more likely that he would have regarded this development more as an injury to the Galatians and the cause of Christ than as a personal wrong.

Galatians 4:13

Commenting on his physical condition at the time he first preached to the Galatians, Paul wrote: "You know, in fact, that because of an illness of the flesh I proclaimed the evangel to you the first time."

Because the conjunction *dé* (but) does not introduce a contrast, a number of modern translations do not use any equivalent term in their renderings. In this case, the word *dé* may have the sense of "indeed" or "in fact."

The Greek expression for "illness" (*asthénéia*) is descriptive of any kind of weakness or infirmity. Because the word is in the accusative case, translators commonly take the phrase *hóti di' asthénéian* to mean "that because of an illness." While the preposition *diá*, when used with the accusative, can mean

“through,” and has thus also been rendered here (KJV), this would not be the usual significance. Elsewhere in Paul’s letters, when the meaning of *diá* is definitely “through,” the term is followed by words in the genitive, not in the accusative, case. (See, for example, 2 Corinthians 6:7, 8.) Even in Luke 17:11, where *diá* means “through,” manuscript evidence varies regarding the case of the word that follows, “midst” (*mésou* [genitive], *méson* [accusative]). If the meaning is “through” (an exception to common use in Paul’s letters), the apostle would be saying that he was physically ill while preaching to the Galatians. When, however, the apostle’s words are understood to denote “on account of an illness,” the emphasis would be on the circumstance that was responsible for his being and preaching in Galatia—his illness. This would suggest that Paul’s affliction prevented him from going to another region. The sickness, infirmity, or weakness is described as being “of the flesh,” that is, of a bodily or physical nature.

To indicate when he proclaimed the evangel in his afflicted state, Paul used the words *tó próteron*, signifying “the former,” “the previous,” or “the first” time. If the apostle had preached in Galatia on one occasion only, his thus specifying the time of his activity would have been unnecessary.

Galatians 4:14

Regarding the response of the Galatians to him, the apostle said, “and your test in my flesh, you did not despise nor reject, but you received me like an angel of God, like Christ Jesus.” Paul’s affliction evidently was so severe that its effect on his “flesh” or physical organism made his bodily condition a test or trial to the Galatians. This may mean that the illness caused the apostle’s physical appearance to be repulsive. If so, the Galatians could have found it difficult to listen to a man whose affliction was of a nature that gave rise to feelings of revulsion. Moreover, the infirmity may have prompted the question of how a teacher of truth could be so terribly afflicted. In any event, the test to the Galatians would have been whether to accept a physically afflicted man as being in God’s service and ultimately, therefore, whether to embrace his message as the truth. According to the reading of other ancient manuscripts (including P46 from about 200), however, the affliction was a trial for Paul. In keeping with the alternate reading, “the bodily infirmity was my trial.”

Regarding what the Galatians did not do, Paul used two very strong terms—*exouthenéo* and *ekptyo*. The word *exouthenéo* is a compound of *ex* (out) and *oudeís* (nothing, nobody, or worth nothing) and means “account as nothing,” “hold in contempt,” or “despise.” A literal meaning of *ekptyo* is “spit out.” The term, therefore, signifies a rejection that is coupled with disdain or disgust. The kind of treatment that might be experienced by one who was terribly afflicted is

revealed in the words of suffering Job: “They abhor me, they stand aloof from me, they do not hesitate to spit in my face.” (Job 30:10, NAB)

The Galatians, however, accepted the apostle as a person who was divinely appointed and a proclaimer of truth. Paul made the contrast distinct by using the conjunction *allá* (but), a stronger term than *dé* (often meaning “but”).

Although the Greek word *ángelos* can refer either to an angel or a human messenger, most translators favour the rendering “angel.” Paul, of course, was a messenger of God. Therefore, the meaning “angel” evidently is preferable, especially since Jesus Christ is greater than the angels. The Galatians accepted the apostle not just as an angel of God, but as the Lord Jesus Christ himself. This indicates that they welcomed and accorded him the highest regard. They were genuinely concerned about his welfare and eagerly embraced the truth that he proclaimed.

Notes:

The reading *hymón* (your) is supported by fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, the original reading of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus; P46 (c. 200), however, reads *mou* (my). In addition to *moú*, the majority of later manuscripts also add the dative *tón*, meaning “which” in this context (which in my flesh). Still other manuscripts include neither *hymón* nor *mou*, but *tón* only.

Although having overwhelming manuscript support, the words *oudé exeptysate* (nor despise; nor treat with contempt) are missing in P46 (c. 200).

Verses 15-18. Losing the blessing of liberty

Galatians 4:15

In view of the Galatians’ change in attitude on account of the influence of false teachers, Paul raised the question: “Where, then, [is] your happiness?” Evidently they experienced great “happiness” because of the apostle’s labors in their midst and found delight in ministering to his needs. This former joy had manifestly ceased to exist, prompting the apostle to ask them what had happened to it. That their happiness included coming to the apostle’s aid is indicated by his next words: “For I bear you witness that, if possible, [after] gouging out your eyes, you would have given [them] to me.” Although the Greek literally reads, “I bear witness to you,” the attestation or favorable witness was about the Galatians and not testimony directed to them. A number of translations simply read, “I can testify.”

If the Galatians could have brought relief to Paul from his distressing affliction, they, regardless of any great personal sacrifice involved, would have done so. Because the eyes are specifically mentioned in the context of the apostle's infirmity, the view has been advanced that he suffered from an extreme eye affliction. There is, however, no clear evidence in the apostle's other letters or in the book of Acts to confirm this. Therefore, it appears preferable to regard the "eyes" as meaning something that is very dear, precious, and irreplaceable. Accordingly, Paul could testify that the Galatians would have been willing to undertake anything within their power to help him, no matter how difficult or costly it might have been.

Notes:

The word *poú* (where) is found in P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. Many other more recent manuscripts read *tís* (what).

While the oldest extant manuscripts (P46, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus) do not have a verb after *oún* (then), many later manuscripts include *én* (was).

Galatians 4:16

The past kindly spirit of the Galatians prompted the apostle to raise another question: "So, have I become your enemy [for] speaking truth to you?" The apostle's first word, *hóste*, is an indicator of result and may be rendered "so," "therefore," "consequently," or "accordingly." By giving ear to false teachers, the Galatians were actually rejecting the truth that Paul had declared to them. This also meant that they no longer regarded him as a trustworthy friend. As Paul's question indicated, his speaking the truth was the reason for the change in attitude toward him.

Unlike English, Greek has a verb form for "truth." This Greek term (*aletheúo*) signifies to communicate, speak or tell the truth. Paul's use of *aletheúo* here manifestly relates to his proclamation of divine truth—the genuine "good news."

Galatians 4:17

Regarding the false teachers, the apostle observed: "They show great interest in you, [though] not [in a] good [way], but they want to exclude you in order that you may show great interest in them." Paul's words indicate that the false teachers had no real concern for the Galatians. The words, "show great interest in," are a rendering of the verb *zelóo*, which in its basic sense means "to be jealous." In this context, however, the word denotes "be greatly concerned about," "show great interest in," "to be the object of another's zeal." There was

nothing commendable about the zealous attention that the false teachers were giving to the Galatians. It was not “good,” fine, right, honorable, or proper.

Regarding the desire of these false teachers, Paul used the word *ekkleío*, meaning “exclude,” or “shut out.” Although the apostle does not mention from what or whom they wanted to “exclude” the Galatians, possibly the implied thought is that these false teachers desired to shut them off from all who upheld the truth and were genuinely concerned about their spiritual welfare. By thus excluding or isolating the Galatians, the false teachers wanted to get their complete attention. It was their objective to be regarded as spiritual guides, occupying the position of an exclusive spiritual authority. They selfishly sought to be the sole object of the Galatians’ “great interest,” “concern,” or “zealous seeking.” When referring to what the false teachers wanted for themselves, Paul again used the verb *zelóo*.

Note: A number of manuscripts do not end the sentence with *zeloúte*, but read *zeloúte dé tá kreíttó charísmata* (may be zealous [for] the greater gifts). This addition probably arose from copyists’ familiarity with 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Galatians 4:18

To show the Galatians that he was not jealous because they had become the object of others’ “great concern,” Paul wrote: “But good [it is] to be shown great interest in good always, and not only when I am present with you.”

The apostle used the conjunction *dé* (but) to contrast the ignoble attention of false teachers with the proper concern. It was “good”, right, or proper at all times for the Galatians to be “shown great interest” (*zelóo*; see the previous verse). The apostle, however, specified that being the object of great concern must be within proper limits. He used the expression *en kaló* (in good), which may be understood to mean “in a good or commendable thing or way,” “for a good purpose” (NRSV), or “for good reason” (NAB). The attention given must be rightly motivated, based on genuine concern for the welfare of those to whom it is directed. Never is there a time when it is wrong to manifest such great concern for others. Paul, therefore, added the modifying adverb *pántote*, meaning “always” or “at all times.”

The apostle did not want to be regarded as the only one who genuinely cared about the Galatians, requiring his personal presence for them to experience being the object of someone’s zealous attention. Rather, he desired that the Galatians be the object of others’ noble concern at all times, not just when he could be with them in person.

A number of translations, though, render the apostle's words in such a way that the Galatians are the ones being encouraged to manifest the proper zeal. "It is always good to give your attention to something worthwhile, even when I am not with you." (CEV) "It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you." (NIV). The contrast with the previous verse, however, makes it preferable to understand Paul's words to refer to zealous attention being given to the Galatians.

4:19-31. The new covenant vs. the old

Verses 19-26. The illustrating allegory

Galatians 4:19

Moved by great love for the Galatians, Paul continued, "My little children, [for] whom I am again in labor pains until Christ is formed in you."

The expression *tekníon*, a diminutive of *téknon* (child), means "little child." (Ancient manuscripts vary, with plural forms of either word [*tékna* (children) or *teknía* (little children)] being used.) By reason of his having been instrumental in their becoming Christ's disciples, Paul was a spiritual father to the Galatians. In addressing them as "my little children," or "my children," the apostle revealed the close relationship he had with them. His affection for them was like that existing between a loving, caring father and his children.

So great was Paul's concern for the Galatians and so keenly distressing to him was their spiritual plight that he spoke of "again" being in labor pains for them. He used the Greek verb *odíno*, which denotes experiencing the pain of childbirth. The apostle had given fully of himself when he first aided the Galatians to become disciples of God's Son. They were the object of Paul's loving care and attention during their development as spiritual babes, drawing heavily on his strength. The anxious care Paul felt for them as the evangel initially began to affect the Galatians was comparable to the pain of childbirth. Because they had come under the influence of false teachers and their spiritual development was in jeopardy, Paul experienced the same distress or anxious concern and therefore spoke of "again" experiencing labor pains. Since the verb *odíno* is in the present tense, this indicates that his distress continued.

For the apostle, relief from anxious concern would not come "until," as he wrote, "Christ is formed in you." Only as mature disciples of God's Son would the Galatians properly reflect what he is. Christ's example and teaching would thus be the sole guiding principle of their life. Their thoughts, words, and actions would be those of their Lord, for they would have his mind. By reason of their

oneness with Christ, he would be a part of the Galatians' inmost selves, influencing every aspect of their lives, and thus be fully "formed" in them.

Galatians 4:20

Revealing his great concern for the Galatians and indicating how difficult it was for him to understand what had happened to them, Paul continued: "But I would like to be with you now and to change my tone, because I am perplexed about you."

The conjunction *dé* (but) may serve to contrast the apostle's being a considerable distance from the Galatians and his unrealizable desire to be with them in person. His circumstances apparently prevented him from immediately going to Galatia. When speaking of his desire, Paul used the verb *thélo* in the imperfect tense, evidently indicative of a desire that, though felt, could not be fulfilled. Paul very much would have wanted to be with the Galatians in person. The infinitive *pareínai* (which he used) signifies "to be present," and is the same expression found in verse 18. Adding immediacy to his unfulfilled desire, the apostle employed the adverb *árti* (now).

Prompted by great love and concern for them, Paul had used very strong language in an effort to bring the Galatians to their senses. Therefore, his reference to "changing" his "tone," literally "voice" (*phoné*), may point to his adopting a milder manner when speaking to the Galatians.

Evidently the apostle sees himself as being personally with the Galatians and changing the tenor or tone from that reflected in his letter. His being in their presence would have enabled him to ascertain firsthand how they had individually been affected by false teaching and then to observe their reaction to his admonition. Apparently Paul believed that the Galatians would respond favorably, making it possible for him to use a milder approach than he had in his letter.

As to his reason for wanting to be with them and change his tone, the apostle said, "I am perplexed about you." The Greek verb for "perplex" (*aporéo*) is a combination of a negative prefix and a verb form of the noun *póros*, meaning "way." So the word literally signifies "without a way" and may be defined as "at a loss" or "perplexed." Paul's being "at a loss" could relate both to his not comprehending how the Galatians could have so quickly deviated from the truth and his not knowing just what to do and say in an effort to help them spiritually.

Galatians 4:21

To arrest their attention and stimulate their thinking, Paul raised a question: "Tell me, those [of you] wanting to be under law, do you not hear the law?" The

apostle's words were specifically directed to all among the Galatian believers who were willing to subject themselves to the requirements of a legal code. This is indicated by his use of the plural *hoi*, (the ones; here translated "those") after the imperative expression "tell me" (*légeté moi*). Evidently, therefore, he recognized that not all the Galatians had been persuaded to place themselves under the demands of law, that is, the Mosaic law.

The import of Paul's question appears to be: "Do you not actually hear or perceive what is stated in the law?" His question also seems to imply that they had not really "heard," because if they had, they would not have wanted to be under the Mosaic law. In view of what follows, the designation "law" (*nómos*) applies to the entire Torah or Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—and not just the commands constituting the legal code.

Note: The word *akoúete* (hear) has the best manuscript support. A number of manuscripts, however, read *anaginóskete* (read).

Galatians 4:22

Paul directed attention to the historical account found in Genesis: "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from the slave [woman] and one from the free [woman]." The conjunction "for" (*gár*) links the apostle's previous question to the historical example found in the Torah. Accordingly, the question is really continued and could be understood to convey the following sense: "Because of what is written in the Torah, do those of you wanting to be under law actually hear what the Torah says?"

After the death of Sarah, Abraham did have other sons by Keturah, his concubine. (Genesis 25:1, 2) The apostle, however, focused only on the time when Abraham had but two sons—Ishmael and Isaac. At the request of Sarah, Abraham had relations with her maidservant, Hagar. Thus, "out of" or "from" the slave woman, Abraham came to have a son, Ishmael. Later, his wife gave birth to Isaac. Sarah had never been a slave but was herself the mistress of Hagar. So Paul referred to Sarah as the "free one," using the feminine form of the word *eleútheros*.

Galatians 4:23

Calling attention to yet another difference, the apostle continued: "But, in fact, the one from the slave [woman] was begotten according to the flesh, but the one from the free [woman] through a promise."

Evidently to contrast what he just said about the "free woman," Paul used a strong indicator of contrast, *allá* (but). The apostle may also have employed the

word *mén* (see Notes), a term used to express emphasis, contrast, or continuation. It may be understood to mean “in fact,” “indeed” or “on the one hand.” If translated “on the one hand,” the term *dé* (but), which introduces the thought about the “free woman,” could be rendered “on the other hand” (Wuest).

Although commonly rendered “born,” the verb *gennáo* often signifies “become father to,” “generate,” or “beget.” It may well have the significance of “beget” in this passage. If so, the begetting “according to the flesh” would mean according to the usual manner of procreation. No divine promise and no miracle were involved in the birth of Abraham’s son by Hagar. Instead, in the procreative process, the usual functioning of the “flesh” or human organism was at work.

The son whom Abraham received “out of” Sarah, the free woman, however, came into existence in a different way. From a physical standpoint, Abraham and Sarah were unable to become parents to a baby boy. The Genesis record reports: “Abraham and Sarah were old, well on in years, and Sarah had ceased to have her monthly periods.” (Genesis 18:11, NJB). Nevertheless, according to the God-given promise conveyed through an angel, Sarah gave birth to a son. (Genesis 18:10–15; 21:1–7; Romans 4:19). Isaac was born “through” or on the basis of a promise. His being conceived, though involving the usual manner of procreation, required a miracle—the reviving of the reproductive powers of Abraham and Sarah. If it had not been for the promise of God, there would have been no miracle, and Sarah would not have given birth to Isaac.

Notes:

P46 (c. 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus omit *mén* (in fact, indeed), which is found in the majority of other manuscripts.

P46 is an exception in omitting the word *ek* (out of, from) in connection with *eleútheras* (free one).

Fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and many other later manuscripts have the definite article *tés* before *epangelías* (promise). Among the manuscripts where *tés* is missing are P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, as well as other later manuscripts.

Galatians 4:24

With reference to the historical facts, Paul then made an application, introducing it with the words, “which [things] are allegorized.” The pronominal adjective *hóstis* appears in the plural form and may be understood to mean “which things,” or “which class of things,” the reference being to the historical facts to which Paul had pointed. When using the expression “class of things,” translators

are able to preserve the singular *estin* (is). For example, Kenneth S. Wuest renders the words, “which class of things is allegorical.”

The verb *allegoréo* (allegorize) is a combination of *állos* (other) and *agoreúo* (speak in the place of assembly). Paul used the expression to denote a sense other than the literal one. Yet, though using the historical facts to illustrate something else, the apostle presented matters in full harmony therewith. The allegorizing was consistent with historical truth. It did not spring from human ingenuity or fanciful imagination.

At this point, Paul continued with the allegorical explanation, “these are two covenants.” The conjunction *gár* (for) that is linked to these words does not have the sense of “because” or “since.” This term basically is an indicator of a new sentence. Therefore, though *gár* could be understood to mean “and,” a number of modern translators simply omit it in their renderings. Being in the feminine gender, the word *haútai* (“these”) applies to the two women—Hagar and Sarah. These women “are” or “represent” two covenants.

The apostle Paul does not identify which covenant Sarah represents but focuses on Hagar, saying, “one, in fact, from Mount Sinai, bringing forth [children] into slavery, which is Hagar.” Because “one” (*mía*) is not specifically identified, some translators have added either “woman” or “covenant.” In view of the emphasis on the covenant and its consequences, the preference probably should be given to covenant. Often, *mén* (indeed, in fact) is left untranslated.

At Mount Sinai, God concluded the law covenant with the nation of Israel, using Moses as the mediator. Because the Israelites, as sinful humans, were unable flawlessly to observe the terms of the covenant, they were condemned by it and exposed as slaves of sin. As Jesus Christ pointed out to the unbelieving Jews who refused to admit their slave status: “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34, NRSV). Like Hagar, the law covenant could not produce free children. It could not liberate even one Israelite from enslavement to sin. Thus, as Paul wrote, there was a bringing forth “into slavery.”

Under the terms of the new covenant, however, forgiveness of sin is possible on the basis of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice. Through Christ, a person could gain the status of a free son. (John 8:36; Hebrews 8:7–12; 10:16–22) Perhaps the apostle regarded Sarah as representing the new covenant. In his letter to the Galatians, however, Paul made no previous reference to the new covenant but highlighted the Abrahamic covenant. According to the promise incorporated in the Abrahamic covenant, blessing would come to peoples other than the natural descendants of Abraham. So there is reason for concluding that Sarah represents

the Abrahamic covenant, under which the blessing would be granted to free sons, not slaves. (Galatians 3:16, 29)

Galatians 4:25

Continuing the allegorical explanation regarding Hagar, Paul wrote: “Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the Jerusalem [of] today, for she is enslaved with her children.”

The conjunction *dé*, commonly meaning “but,” does not introduce a contrast. Therefore, the word may be understood to signify “now.” Numerous manuscripts, however, read *gár* (“for”), which could here have the sense of “indeed” or “in fact.”

Because the law was given at Mount Sinai, Hagar “is” or represents the eminence that belongs to the earthly sphere in Arabia, an extensive arid region situated to the south and east of Israel. The exact location of Mount Sinai cannot be established with absolute certainty. In the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula, there is a red granite ridge with two peaks—Gebel Musa (Mountain of Moses) and Ras Safsafa. According to the traditional view, Mount Sinai is Gebel Musa. Only in front of Ras Safsafa, however, lies an extensive plain that could have accommodated a large number of people, suggesting that this peak is the more likely site.

The Greek word rendered “and” (preceding the words about Jerusalem) is *dé*, which often means “but.” Because there is no contrast but a continuation of the thought, “and” appears to give the correct sense.

Common renderings for *systoichéo* are “correspond” and “represent.” The word consists of the prefix *syn* (with) and *stoichos* (row, line, file), thus denoting “to be in the same line, row, or file.” Hagar, as Paul stated, “corresponds to the Jerusalem of today [*nyn*, now].” At that time, Jerusalem with its temple served as the Jewish center for worship. As such, the city represented the entire Jewish nation that was subject to the Mosaic law.

Because the inhabitants of a city are the children thereof, the apostle spoke of Jerusalem and her children. The entire nation was bound by the law and exposed by it as sinful. So Jerusalem was not a free city but in bondage, as were her children (the individual members of the nation).

Note: There are a number of variant readings. While many read *dé* (but), others read *gár* (for). In certain manuscripts neither *dé* nor *gár* are found in the text. Another omission is the name *Hagár*.

Galatians 4:26

Genuine disciples of Jesus Christ are justified on the basis of faith and cease to be condemned sinners. They are citizens or children of another city, or have another mother. As Paul wrote, “But the Jerusalem above is free, which [city] is our mother.”

The conjunction *dé* (but) introduces a contrast. Unlike the nation of Israel and the individual members thereof (Jerusalem and her children), the “Jerusalem above” is a free, royal city. In this heavenly city, God reigns by means of his Son. Because the Father and the Son are personally present, the “Jerusalem above” is also the center of pure worship. This holy, royal city is the mother of all believers who are free sons of God. (Compare Hebrews 12:22–24.)

Note: In many manuscripts the word *pánton* (of all) follows *méter* (mother), but it is not found in the oldest extant manuscripts—P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and the original text of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus.

Allegory: law vs. grace

Hagar

Old covenant (law)
Mount Sinai
Bondage, her children were slaves
performing the rites of the Sinaitic law
Jerusalem that now is

Bondwoman
After the flesh
Her children born into slavery
Powerless to change their status
Works

Sarah

New covenant (grace)
Mount Calvary
Freedom

Heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb 12:18-24)
Freewoman
Divine promise
Her children born into freedom
Dignity of sons with a preferred status
Faith

Verses 27-31. The meaning of the allegory

Galatians 4:27

Backing up his statement, Paul appealed to the Scriptures, “for it is written.” The passage to which he referred is Isaiah 54:1: “Rejoice, barren [woman], the one not giving birth, break forth [in jubilation] and cry aloud, the one not having labour pains, because more [are] the children of the desolate [woman] than of the one having the husband.”

As clearly evident from verses 2 through 8 of Isaiah 54, this prophecy pointed to the time when Jerusalem would be desolated and, eventually, restored to favor. While Jerusalem lay in ruins without any inhabitants, the city proved to be a childless, barren woman. She was then in a state of “rejection.” Prior to this pathetic condition, however, Jerusalem enjoyed the status of a mother with sons, bound as a wife to YHWH by reason of the law covenant. After completing the period of rejection, however, the number of sons would prove to be greater than had been the case during the former time when Jerusalem had a “husband.” (Compare Zechariah 2:1–5; 8:3–8.) Because these sons would be acknowledged by the Most High as his, the fulfilment relates to the time when such sons—true Israelites—would come into being. Such sons would be children of the city of God, the true Jerusalem.

Sarah similarly had long been barren and, when Hagar became pregnant, felt rejected. (Genesis 16:5) Still, the children of the long-barren free woman—Sarah—were to be more numerous than those of the slave woman Hagar. (Compare Genesis 16:10; 17:16; 19, 20.)

Because the main point of Paul’s argument pertains to earthly Jerusalem and her children, the barren woman manifestly is to be understood as the “Jerusalem above,” which long appeared to have no earthly children that could be called free “sons of God.” The situation, though, was to change dramatically, giving rise to the rejoicing foretold in Isaiah’s prophecy. The Greek word for “rejoice” (*euphráino*) is a combination of *eú* (well) and *phrén* (mind).

Galatians 4:28

After having identified the mother of believers, Paul wrote: “Now you, brothers, according to [the manner of] Isaac, are children of the promise.”

The conjunction *dé* (but) could be regarded as serving to contrast the children of the woman having the husband with the “children of the promise” Since, however, Paul’s apparent objective in quoting from Isaiah was to point to the “Jerusalem above” as the mother of believers, the word *dé* may simply be an indicator of continuation and may be rendered “now” or “and.”

Although certain Christians in Galatia had allowed themselves to be influenced by false teachers, the apostle still recognized them as his “brothers,” or fellow sons of God. This is the fourth time in his letter that Paul addressed the Galatians in this way (1:11; 3:15; 4:12), and he continued to do so five more times (4:31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18).

Isaac’s birth occurred in fulfilment of God’s promise. Without that promise and the divine miracle needed to bring about its realization, there would have been

no Isaac. Similarly, God promised to bless peoples other than the natural descendants of Abraham. To be thus blessed required that they come to enjoy a divinely approved standing—an impossibility for sinful humans. The Most High, however, made possible the fulfilment of the promise by sending his Son to the earth and letting him die sacrificially on behalf of sinners. Through their unconditional acceptance of the divine provision for forgiveness of sins, genuine believers are counted as righteous by God and adopted as his sons. Hence, not on the basis of natural descent from Abraham but by reason of the promise of God, believers have been constituted sons and are blessed accordingly. As in the case of Isaac, their existence as “sons” must be attributed to God’s promise and his loving act in effecting its fulfilment.

Note: The reading *hymeís ... esté* (you are) has the support of P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, as well as other later manuscripts. Many other extant manuscripts, however, read *hemeís ... esmén* (we are). These manuscripts include fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus.

Galatians 4:29

Commenting on the way in which Ishmael treated Isaac and then making an application to unbelievers and believers, Paul said: “But even as then the one begotten according to the flesh persecuted the one [begotten] according to the spirit, so also now.”

The conjunction *allá* (but) serves to introduce a negative aspect that contrasts with the previously mentioned dignified status of being “children of the promise.”

Ishmael was begotten by Abraham and conceived by Hagar “according to the flesh”—the human function of procreation. No divine promise and no miracle were involved in the birth.

The Greek word for “persecute” (*dióko*) is in the imperfect tense, suggesting repeated action. Ishmael’s hateful attitude manifested itself fully on the day Isaac was weaned. During the feast Abraham arranged to celebrate this event, Sarah observed teenage Ishmael “playing” (*paízo*, LXX) with Isaac. Since the incident so disturbed Sarah that she immediately requested Abraham to dismiss Hagar and Ishmael from the household, the “playing” must have taken the form of “jesting,” “jeering,” or “taunting.” (Genesis 21:8–10) Rightly, then, Paul referred to Ishmael as persecuting “the one [begotten] according to the spirit.” Isaac’s birth was miraculous and fulfilled the divine promise that Abraham and Sarah would have a son. The words “according to the spirit” could mean

“according to the operation of God’s spirit” that made the birth of Isaac possible. (Regarding “begotten,” see verse 23.)

Paralleling what had occurred in the past with the then-existing situation relative to persecution, Paul simply said, “so also now.” As in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, the unbelieving natural descendants of Abraham persecuted the free sons—believers who had been justified and experienced a new birth through the operation of God’s spirit.

Galatians 4:30

Again pointing to the historical example of Ishmael and Isaac, Paul wrote: “But what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the slave [woman] and her son, for the son of the slave [woman] will not inherit with the son of the free [woman].’”

The conjunction *allá* (but) apparently indicates the great contrast between the seemingly strong position of the persecutor and the final outcome of his being expelled from the household. Paul quoted the words of Sarah directed to Abraham as “Scripture.” Since Abraham acted upon her words in harmony with divine direction, the apostle rightly referred to them as “Scripture” or God’s words. (Genesis 21:10–14). The quotation itself basically corresponds to the extant Septuagint reading of Genesis 21:10. In Genesis, however, Sarah is quoted as saying “the son of me, Isaac” (or, “my son Isaac”). The apostle, in keeping with his argument and the historical facts, identified Isaac as the “son of the free [woman],” Sarah.

Note: Apparently to conform the quotation to the Septuagint, some later copyists changed *tés eleuthéras* (of the free [woman]) to *mou Isaák* (of me Isaac)—a reading found in a number of manuscripts.

Galatians 4:31

Having established that genuine believers are sons and thus in line for the inheritance, Paul concluded: “Therefore, brothers, we are not children of a slave [woman], but of the free [woman].” The conjunction *dió*, may be understood as introducing a summation and here evidently denotes “therefore,” “accordingly,” or “for this reason.” Likewise, the word *ára* (found in many manuscripts) may be rendered “consequently,” “thus,” or “therefore.”

Though the Galatians had erred, Paul again addressed them as “brothers,” acknowledging them as fellow sons of God. Not bound by the obligations of the law covenant and not under condemnation for failure to live up to its requirements flawlessly, disciples of Jesus Christ are not children of an arrangement represented by the slave woman Hagar. Children of a slave woman would themselves be slaves, not free sons. It may be significant that Paul did not

use the definite article with “slave [woman],” as this could suggest that believers are not the children of any enslaving system. The fact that the definite article does precede “free [woman]” lends some weight to this conclusion.

To introduce what believers are, the apostle used the conjunction *allá* (but) as an indicator of contrast. Without qualification, Paul included all genuine believers as being children of “the free [woman].” They are the free sons of “Jerusalem above,” citizens of the royal city, where “Christ is seated at God’s right hand.” (Colossians 3:1, 4; compare Psalm 2:6–8; 110:1, 2; Acts 2:33, 36; Philippians 3:20.)

Note: The majority of manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200), read *ára* (therefore). Besides a number of later manuscripts, fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus have the word *dió* (therefore, for this reason). Two other variants are *ára oún* (for this reason then) and *hemeís dé* (but we).

Galatians, chapter 5

(From the King James Version 1611)

- 1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.
- 2: Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.
- 3: For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.
- 4: Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.
- 5: For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.
- 6: For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.
- 7: Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?
- 8: This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.
- 9: A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
- 10: I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.
- 11: And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.
- 12: I would they were even cut off which trouble you.
- 13: For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.
- 14: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love

thy neighbour as thyself.

15: But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

16: This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18: But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19: Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20: Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21: Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26: Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Chapter 5

5:1-9. The peril of falling from grace

Verses 1-3. Falling from grace

Galatians 5:1

In view of their being sons of the “free woman,” Paul admonished the Galatians: “For freedom Christ has freed us. Stand [firm], therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

By laying down his life, Christ made possible a liberation from enslavement to sin. The Son of God did this so that believers might enjoy this marvelous freedom. They are freed to be free, not freed in order to come under another kind of servitude. The definite article in the dative case precedes “freedom” (*eleuthería*), indicating that this is a specific freedom and not one of a general kind.

If the original text included the conjunction *oún* (therefore) after *stékete* (stand), the meaning would be that Christ's freeing them gives believers the reason for standing firm in their granted freedom. A failure to do so would mean acting contrary to the purpose of what Jesus did at great cost to himself.

The verb *stéko* can have the literal sense of “stand,” the opposite of “sit.” In this context, however, it has the figurative sense of “standing firm” in the state of freedom.

As former worshipers of false gods, the Galatians engaged in prescribed ceremonies and rituals to placate the deities. So they were subject to an enslaving arrangement. For them willingly to submit themselves to the terms of the Mosaic law would have meant *again* coming under a yoke. The Greek word that here denotes “to be subject to” or “submit to” is *enécho*. This word is a combination of *en* (in) and *écho* (hold) and literally means to “hold in.” The sense conveyed is that of confinement. Accordingly, Paul urged the Galatians not to allow themselves to become captives.

When under a yoke, an animal is deprived of its freedom and impressed into service. Similarly, slaves often had to carry heavy burdens suspended from yokes borne on their shoulders. In a figurative sense, the word “yoke” (*zygós*) can refer to anything that obligates or forces an individual to serve. The term is not preceded by a definite article and so could signify any yoke—any arrangement that could result in a position of servitude. In depriving the individual of freedom, the yoke, as Paul said, is a “yoke of slavery.”

Note: For this verse there are a number of variant manuscript readings, including the following: *Té eleuthería oún hé Christós hemás eleuthérosen stékete* (For the freedom, therefore, for which Christ freed us, stand). While a form of the verb for “free” is found in the majority of manuscripts, one late manuscript (fourteenth or fifteenth century) reads *exegórase* (purchased, redeemed)

Galatians 5:2

Calling attention to an important truth, Paul wrote: “Look! I, Paul, tell you that, if you get circumcised, Christ will not benefit you.”

The word *íde* (look) evidently served to get the attention of the Galatians and to stress the vital point that follows. They, of course, knew that Paul had written the letter. Therefore, the words, “I, Paul,” evidently are designed to emphasize Paul's position as a divinely appointed apostle and thus to add solemnity to his next words.

Circumcision was linked to the Mosaic law. Hence, for the Galatians, as non-Jews, to get circumcised would have indicated their acceptance of the requirements of the law. (Acts 15:1, 5, 10, 11) At the same time, this would have meant adopting the belief that faith in Christ Jesus was insufficient to enjoy the fullness of divine approval. Instead of relying on the divine arrangement through Christ as the sole basis for having a righteous standing before God, the Galatians would have begun depending on their own efforts to prove themselves righteous by trying to live up to the law. Thus, by their course of action, they would have signified that they did not need Christ. As Paul said, “Christ will not benefit you.”

The Greek verb translated “benefit” (*opheléo*) may also be defined as “aid,” “help,” “be of advantage,” or “be of use.” It is preceded by a strong negative *oudén*, which may be rendered “absolutely not,” “not at all,” “by no means,” or “in no respect.” Though the Galatians had greatly benefited from Christ, their getting circumcised and taking upon themselves the concomitant obligation to obey the Mosaic law would have meant that the Son of God would no longer be of any benefit, help or advantage to them.

Galatians 5:3

Developing this aspect further, Paul continued: “And I affirm again to every man getting circumcised that he is under obligation to obey the entire law.”

In this context, the conjunction *dé* apparently does not mean “but.” Evidently being an indicator of continuation rather than contrast, the word may have the sense of “additionally,” “moreover,” or “and.” Because the meaning of Paul’s words remains unchanged when *dé* is not rendered by an English equivalent indicating continuation, numerous modern versions simply do not incorporate it in their renderings.

The Greek word for “affirm” (*martyréo*) also denotes “bear witness,” “testify,” or “attest” and, in this context, conveys the sense of “declaring in a solemn way.” Although Paul had not made this exact statement previously, it was implied when he told the Galatians that Christ would be of no benefit at all to them if they got circumcised. The apostle had introduced that important truth in a solemn manner—“I, Paul” (5:2). So, “again” (*pálin*), or “once more,” he was “attesting,” “affirming,” or “solemnly declaring.”

For any non-Jew to get circumcised would have meant identifying himself with the natural Jews. Circumcision would have constituted a physical sign that he was a Jewish proselyte. When accepting the law’s requirement of circumcision, non-Jews imposed upon themselves the duty to “do” (*poiéo*) everything commanded in the law. The word rendered “under obligation” is “debtor”

(*opheilétes*). Thus, the one getting circumcised would burden himself with the debt of the “whole” or “entire” law—a debt or obligation that he would be unable to fulfill.

Note: Though missing in a number of manuscripts, the reading *palín* (again) has overwhelming manuscript support.

Verses 4-9. The sad results of falling from grace

Galatians 5:4

Continuing to refer to the serious consequences of such a course, Paul said: “You, who in law are [seeking to be] justified, are separated from Christ; from favor you have fallen.”

To seek to be justified “in law” would mean attempting to gain a righteous standing before God in the realm or sphere of law. This would require flawless observance of everything prescribed therein.

The verb for “justify” (*dikaióo*) is in the present tense and here, in the form of a second person plural, means “are being justified.” Since, however, actual justification is impossible in the domain of law, Paul’s meaning evidently is “attempting or seeking to be justified.”

The Greek word for “separated” (*katargéo*) is a combination of *katá* (down) and *argós* (idle, inactive, unemployed). It here denotes being in a state of estrangement or separation from Christ—in a domain where he is not active.

Any arrangement that relies on law observance for gaining a righteous standing with God constitutes a rejection of what Christ accomplished by laying down his life sacrificially. Accordingly, the individual attempting to be justified in the realm of law places himself in a domain where Christ’s cleansing work and any relationship with him are nonexistent. One’s having a righteous standing before God is completely outside the sphere of law. The sole basis for justification is faith in Christ Jesus and what he accomplished by sacrificing his life. Because no one work or a combination of efforts can secure an approved standing with God, the arrangement through Christ is an expression of divine favor, kindness, or grace—unearned or unmerited.

The Greek word *ekpípto*, commonly rendered “fallen away from,” literally means “fall out” (*ek*, out; *pípto*, fall). To choose the Mosaic law (and, by extension, any legalistic arrangement) as the means for gaining divine approval signifies to fall or drop out of the sphere of favor and to enter into the realm of legalism.

Galatians 5:5

Highlighting the conviction of genuine believers about justification, Paul wrote: “For we by spirit, out of faith, are eagerly awaiting [the] hope of righteousness.”

Legalism relies on works, not faith. The conjunction *gár* (for) may be viewed as introducing what contrasts with seeking to be justified “in law” and thus could mean “but.” There is, however, a possibility that *gár* has the sense of “because” or “on the other hand,” indicating that those seeking to be justified “in law” had “fallen from favor” for the reason that righteousness has its source in faith.

When using the pronoun “we” (*hemeís*) Paul evidently meant to include all genuine believers and was not using the word editorially.

The word “spirit” (*pneúma*) is in the dative case, giving it the meaning “by or by means of spirit.” Since the believer’s own spirit, disposition, or inner motivation is not the initial source for the eager awaiting of the “hope of righteousness,” the reference apparently is to God’s spirit. The operation of Holy Spirit on the believer engenders the hope for and impels a yearning for righteousness. While genuine believers enjoy a righteous standing before God, this is an imputed righteousness only. Their having absolute righteousness or sinlessness is yet future. As in the case of imputed righteousness, faith is the basis for coming into possession of the fullness of righteousness. As Paul said, it is “out of faith,” having its source in unqualified trust in Christ and the divine arrangement for gaining the Father’s approval. Evidently because complete righteousness is a promised future possession, Paul spoke of the “hope of righteousness” or a “hoped-for righteousness” (Wuest).

Being an intensification of *déchomai* (accept, receive, take,), *apekdéchomai* conveys the sense of “reaching out in expectation of receiving something” and so may be rendered “eagerly await.” This waiting is made possible because the Holy Spirit gives rise to the “hope of righteousness” and impels a longing for its realization. Because the fullness of righteousness is future, faith is needed to wait for it and then, finally, to attain it.

Galatians 5:6

Building on his point about the importance of faith, Paul said: “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision has power nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love [does].”

The conjunction *gár* (for) evidently is to be viewed as introducing the reason for waiting “out of faith.” Because of being “in Christ Jesus”—incorporated into the body of which he is the head—circumcised believers have no advantage over uncircumcised ones nor is there greater benefit in being uncircumcised.

In effecting a righteous standing before God, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any power. The Greek verb *ischyo* denotes “having might or strength.” Preceded by the negative, the word has the sense of “no force,” “no avail,” or “no value.” Since the verb is in the present tense, this indicates that the state of having no strength continues. One’s being circumcised or uncircumcised simply has no bearing on the close union that is enjoyed with Christ Jesus. Neither state has any merit or value.

The individual’s incorporation into the body of Christ has its source in faith—faith in him and what he accomplished by dying sacrificially. Thus, what counts is faith or unqualified trust. Paul introduced the thought about faith with a strong indicator of contrast—*allá*, meaning “but.” This faith is a powerful motivator, finding its expression in attitudes, words, and deeds that are a product of love. (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:16–18) It is “through” (*diá*) love or by means of love, therefore, that the reality of a genuine faith becomes manifest.

Notes:

Though contained in the majority of manuscripts, *gár* (for) is missing from P46 (c. 200).

Fourth-century Codex Vaticanus omits *Iesouí* (of Jesus), but this departs from the reading of the majority of manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200).

Galatians 5:7

Focusing on the past experience of the Galatians, Paul said: “You were running well. Who stopped you from obeying the truth?”

The verb “run” (*trécho*) here is in the imperfect tense, indicative of past activity in progress. While *trécho* basically means “run,” the expression can denote to “exert oneself” or to “make progress” (as does a runner). In the past, the Galatians were “running well” or “making good progress.” After Paul proclaimed the evangel, they were convinced that what they heard was the truth, and their way of life began to reflect this. As the evangel continued to have a wholesome effect on their attitudes, words, and deeds, the Galatians were making commendable strides forward.

Good progress in their Christian course, however, had been adversely impacted, giving rise to Paul’s question as to who was responsible for placing an obstacle in their way. The Greek word that may be rendered “stop,” “prevent,” “hinder,” or “obstruct” (*enkópto*) literally signifies to “cut into” (as if by putting an obstacle in the path or tearing up the road).

The “truth” embraces Christian teaching as a whole, with the primary focus being on God’s Son and what he accomplished through his sacrificial death. Initially, the Galatians had yielded responsively to this truth. Then, some person(s) stopped them from continuing to do so by inducing them to accept a legalistic system instead of relying solely on Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death as the means to have an approved standing before God. The Greek word commonly translated “obey” (*peítho*) basically signifies to “convince,” “persuade,” or “win over.” In the passive voice (as here), *peítho* has the sense of “obey,” “heed,” or “yield to.” The fact that here the infinitive form of this verb is in the present tense reveals that the Galatians continued in their failure to obey the truth, particularly as it related to the means by which a righteous standing before God was made possible.

Note: The definite article (before “truth”) *té* (the) is missing in the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, the original reading of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus. It is, however, found in many other manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200).

Galatians 5:8

Drawing attention to the One who was not the source of the change in the Galatians, Paul wrote: “The persuasion [of not obeying the truth] is not from the One calling you.”

The noun *peismoné* (persuasion) is related to the verb *peítho* (used in the previous verse and basically meaning “persuade,” “convince,” or “win over”). Thus, there exists a seeming play on words. The failure of the Galatians to obey, as though no longer convinced or persuaded to do so, was not a persuasion that had its source in the One calling them. Paul used the preposition *ek*, commonly translated “from,” and here is an indicator of source or origin.

As earlier, the apostle does not identify the one doing the calling (1:6). Manifestly, however, Paul meant the Father, the One who had also called him while he was still a persecutor of Christ’s disciples (1:15). The persuasion to which the Galatians had yielded simply was not from God. His call had been an expression of favor—unearned and unmerited. It was independent of any requirement to observe a legal code.

Galatians 5:9

Evidently to illustrate the corrupting influence that had affected the Galatians, the apostle used the proverbial saying: “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

In Paul’s day, fermented dough from a previous baking served as leaven. Adding just a small amount of leaven to a lump of dough ferments the entire

batch. Likewise, seemingly insignificant error or a comparatively small number of false teachers can pervert truth. Jesus Christ referred to the false teaching of the Pharisees and others as leaven. (Matthew 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15) Paul's use of the proverb may apply to the false teachers or to their doctrine. If viewed from the standpoint of teaching, the reference would be to the adulteration of truth. On the other hand, taking the leaven to mean the false teachers would point to the pernicious effect that they (though of insignificant number) could have on an entire body of professing believers.

Note: P46 (c. 200) differs from the majority of manuscripts in omitting the definite article (*tó*) before *phyrama* (lump).

The original reading in the sixth-century Codex Claromontanus is *doloí* (deceives), which departs from the usual *zymoí* (leavens).

5:10-15. The call to freedom under grace

Verses 10-13a. The call

Galatians 5:10

Paul, however, did not believe that genuine disciples of Jesus Christ would experience spiritual ruin. "As for me, I am confident about you in [the] Lord that you will not think otherwise, but the [one] who is upsetting you will bear the condemnation, whoever he may be.

As the opening word, the emphatical *egó* (I) has the sense of "as for me." Because his conviction was completely dependent on the Lord, the head of the corporate body composed of all genuine believers, the apostle used the verb *peítho* (as in 1:10 and 5:7, which see) to express his "feeling sure" or "being confident about [Galatian believers] in the Lord." Paul had no doubt that Jesus Christ would look out for the spiritual interests of his disciples, safeguarding them from succumbing to faith-destroying influences. (Luke 22:32; John 10:27–29; 17:12)

The apostle did not add a clarifying expression when writing "that you will not think otherwise." He may have meant (1) deviating from what he had presented in his letter, (2) differing from their initial correct response to the glad tidings he proclaimed, or (3) departing from the truth. In any event, the basic sense is that of not accepting beliefs contrary to what was right.

Paul had earlier used the word *tarásso* (1:7), which means to "unsettle," "stir up," "disturb," "throw into confusion," "disquiet," "upset," or "perplex," and indicated that "certain ones" were responsible for unsettling the Galatians. Here, however, the apostle appears to single out the chief and most influential

troublemaker. Thereby Paul may have implied that all others who were involved would share in being recipients of condemnatory judgment. The proponent of teaching that conflicted with the glad tidings could not escape condemnation. As the apostle said, he would have to “bear the condemnation” (*kríma*, [judgment, punishment]).

The words “whoever he may be” could suggest prominence, high social standing, or an elevated position. On the other hand, the expression “whoever he may be” could be regarded as all-embracing—high or low station or rank. Absolutely nothing would shield the troublemaker from experiencing divine condemnation.

Notes:

After the emphatical *egó* (I [as for me]), a number of manuscripts read *dé* (but), including P46 (c. 200).

Fourth-century Codex Vaticanus omits *en kyrío* (in [the] Lord), thus departing from the usual reading of the text.

Manuscripts vary in reading either *eán* or *án*. This variation has no bearing on translation, as both words here function as a conditional particle having the same significance.

Galatians 5:11

Calling attention to his own stand on the matter of circumcision and law observance, Paul said: “But as for me, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then the offense of the cross has been abolished.”

As in the previous verse, the first word in the Greek text is *egó*. This emphatical “I” denotes “as for me.”

The conjunction *dé* here evidently means “but.” This term serves to focus on the apostle’s being markedly different from the advocates of circumcision.

Despite the fact that the Galatians had allowed themselves to be unsettled by false teaching, Paul continued to reason with them as his beloved “brothers,” fellow sons of God.

While a fanatical Pharisee, Paul was a promoter of circumcision, insisting that any non-Jews who wanted God’s favor needed to be circumcised and comply with the requirements of the Mosaic law. Certain individuals apparently were contending that, when it suited his purpose, he “still” proclaimed the need for circumcision. They may have supported their claim by pointing to Paul’s

circumcising Timothy, who was from Lystra and therefore well known in congregations of the Roman province of Galatia. (Acts 16:1–3)

Proving that he was not teaching circumcision as having a bearing on getting an approved standing with God, Paul raised the question, “Why am I still being persecuted?” The Galatians were familiar with the intense opposition that the apostle faced from the Jews because of his not advocating circumcision and law observance as essential for divine approval. (Acts 13:44–50; 14:1–7, 19; 17:1–14)

In the first century, Jews held widely divergent beliefs, with the Sadducees even rejecting the teaching of the resurrection and the existence of angels. (Acts 23:8) So, in time, Christians could have become just another tolerated sect of Judaism if they had insisted that non-Jewish converts needed to be circumcised and live by the precepts of the Mosaic law. In fact, certain Pharisees who sat in judgment of Paul were, on one occasion, willing to pronounce him innocent despite his belief in Jesus’ resurrection. (Acts 23:9) The issue that caused the irreconcilable rift, however, was Paul’s preaching that non-Jews could be divinely approved on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ without their being circumcised and having to obey the law. Accordingly, the fact that the apostle was “still” being persecuted by the Jews undeniably proved that he had ceased preaching circumcision.

If Paul had preached circumcision as essential for non-Jews “the offense of the cross” would have been abolished (*katargéo*). Twice before (3:17; 5:4) the apostle had used the word *katargéo*. It here conveys the sense of “abolished,” “made ineffective,” or “destroyed.”

For the Jews, the problem was not the implement on which Jesus died, but what it signified as respects gaining divine approval. The “offense” (*skándalon*), “obstacle,” or “cause for stumbling” was accepting that, for Jews and non-Jews, Jesus’ death atoned for sins and that faith in him and what his death accomplished constituted the sole basis for being pronounced guiltless by God. This was highly offensive, since it placed Jews and non-Jews on the same level with reference to gaining the status of approved children of God. It was a tremendous blow to Jewish pride, removing any advantage in being a direct descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. So, for Paul to have continued preaching circumcision would have abolished this cause for offense, as it would have upheld the prevailing Jewish view that, ultimately, circumcision and legalistic observance of the law determined a person’s standing before God.

Notes: Though omitted in a number of manuscripts, *éti* (still) has the support of the majority, including the oldest.

Regarding “cross,” see the note on Galatians 2:19.

Galatians 5:12

Revealing how strongly he felt about the advocates of circumcision, Paul said: “[I] wish that those who are upsetting you would also castrate themselves.” The Greek word *óphelon* expresses a wish without any thought of its actually being fulfilled. By insisting on the necessity of circumcision, the false teachers were creating disturbance among the Galatians. In describing the effect of their false teaching, Paul used the word *anastatóo*, which can mean “agitate,” “stir up” (as when inciting to revolt) and, as here, “upset” or “unsettle.”

The Greek word *apokópto* can simply mean “cut off.” J. B. Phillips adopted this rendering (“cut themselves off”) and added the words “from you altogether.” This would signify that Paul’s wish was that they cease being associated with the congregation. Ancient commentators who spoke Greek as their native tongue, however, understood Paul to mean “self-mutilation,” “castration,” or “emasculatation,” and there is no contextual indication suggesting that the reference is to cutting themselves off from the congregation.

When wishing that they “also” or “even” [*kaí*] go to the point of emasculation, Paul apparently expressed great disdain for the false teachers and their unspiritual view of circumcision. In reality, what these men were insisting upon and representing as meritorious amounted to nothing more than a mutilation of the flesh. Because they took such pride in this comparatively minor operation, Paul’s wish was that they choose a complete mutilation for themselves.

Note: P46 (c. 200) departs from the usual reading *óphelon* (wish) and says *ára* (then), possibly an inadvertent repetition of the previous *ára* (vs. 11).

Verses 13b-15. The warning against license

Galatians 5:13

Pointing to the reason for his strong words, Paul continued: “For you have been called to freedom, brothers, only not freedom [serving] as an occasion for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Evidently the Greek word *gár* (for) is to be viewed as introducing the reason for the apostle’s previous statement directed against the proponents of circumcision, men who were intent on depriving the Galatians of their freedom and inducing them to accept an enslaving legalistic arrangement.

Again, Paul addressed the Galatians as “brothers,” continuing to acknowledge them as fellow sons of God.

The apostle did not specify who did the calling. In other letters, however, he identified the Father as the one doing so. (Romans 8:28–30; 1 Corinthians 1:26,

27; 7:17–24; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 4:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; 2 Timothy 1:9) God’s call was one to a state of freedom, not servitude to a legalistic system. Believers were to enjoy the status of free sons of God, persons declared guiltless on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ and what he accomplished through his death. Their freedom, though, was not to be unbridled. It did not give them license for indulging sensual desires having their source in the sinful flesh (fallen human nature).

The Greek word *aphormé* denotes “occasion,” “opportunity,” “excuse,” or “pretext.” It can designate a “base of operations” (as in war). Accordingly, freedom was not to serve as an opening or starting point for giving in to degrading fleshly desires.

Instead of indulging their passions, the Galatians were to render noble service. Paul used a strong indicator of contrast, *allá* (but), when making this point. The apostle’s words “through love” indicate that love was to be expressed by serving one another, responding to the needs of fellow believers. Evidently false teaching had caused serious divisions among believers in Galatia, and this would have interfered with their showing love for one another. Paul’s admonition to serve one another out of love was truly needed.

Note: A number of later manuscripts add *tou pneúmatos* (of the spirit) after *agápes* (love, genitive case).

Galatians 5:14

Whereas the false teachers were responsible for creating dissension and a dampening effect on the manifestation of love, the very law that they were so eagerly trying to impose on non-Jews promoted love. Pointing to the true spirit of the law, Paul wrote: “For the whole law is fulfilled in one saying, that is, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

The Greek preposition *gár* (for) links Paul’s counsel to “serve one another” with the proof he presented from the law. While commonly having the sense of “fulfil,” *pleróo*, in this case, may be understood to mean “sum up,” “provide the real import,” or “convey the full significance.” “One saying” or precept expressed the real meaning of the law, and that precept required loving one’s neighbour as oneself, displaying the kind of concern and care for others that one has for self.

Kenneth Wuest, however, renders the apostle’s words to mean that “fulfilling” denotes “heeding” or “obeying.” “The whole law in one utterance stands fully obeyed, namely, in this, Love your neighbour as you do yourself.” An alternate reading found in a few manuscripts (in you in one word [saying] is being

fulfilled) does, in fact, relate the fulfilling to the Galatians and their living in harmony with the precept set forth in the law.

Paul's quotation from Leviticus 19:18 corresponds to the extant text of the Septuagint. The Greek word for "neighbour," *plésion* basically means "one who is near," and the corresponding term in the Hebrew text, *réa'* denotes a "companion," "fellow," or "friend." As members of the Christian congregation, the Galatians certainly were "neighbours," and they should have been treating fellow believers in a manner that they would have chosen for themselves. This, however, was not the case.

Notes:

Some later manuscripts read *lógos* (word) instead of the usual *nómos* (law).

A few later manuscripts read *en hymín en hení lógo* (in you in one word). The words *en hymín* (in you), however, are missing from the majority of manuscripts.

P46 (c. 200) departs from the usual reading, omitting *sou* (of you, your) after *plesíon* (neighbour).

Galatians 5:15

Paul's next words give an indication of a serious loss of love among the Galatians. "But if you bite and devour one another, see that you may not destroy one another."

The baneful influence under which the congregations of Galatia had come must have created serious rifts, with individuals taking strong positions for or against errant teaching. This would have disrupted the peace of the congregations and given rise to bitter arguments and feelings. Apparently the controversies and divisions had developed to a point where they could be described in terms of beastly biting and devouring of prey.

In Greek, "bite" (*dákno*) and "devour" (*katesthío*) are in the present tense, indicating that the Galatians were continuing to inflict serious injuries on one another. They were wounding others as if by biting them and then callously giving no thought to the terrible hurt they were causing, acting much like beasts that devour pieces bitten off from their prey.

With reference to the destructive spirit that had developed among the Galatians, Paul gave his sobering warning. The Galatians needed to watch that the continuance of the deplorable, loveless situation might not lead to mutual

annihilation. They simply could not survive as congregations if those associated kept on harming one another.

The Greek word for “destroy” (*analísko*,) can also convey the sense of “consume.” At Genesis 41:30, for example, the word appears in the Septuagint with reference to the effect of a seven-year famine in the land of Egypt.

5:16-18. Sanctification and the Holy Spirit

16a. The human condition

16b-18. The divine undertaking

Galatians 5:16

Paul followed up his warning with the admonition that called for positive action: “But I say, walk [by] spirit and you will not carry out [the] desire of the flesh.”

The conjunction *dé* (but) may be regarded as introducing “walking by spirit” as a contrast to “biting and devouring”—descriptive of an unspiritual, destructive course. Since the Greek word for “walk” (*peripatéo*) is in the present tense, it denotes to keep on or to continue walking. Such walking refers to following a course of life. The verb *peripatéo* also is an imperative, indicating that this walk requires an assent of the will.

Since an individual’s own spirit (*pneúma*), disposition, or prevailing attitude would not consistently counteract the desires of the sinful flesh, *pneúma* here is God’s spirit. The Greek word is in the dative case, showing that the spirit is the means by which the walking is accomplished. Therefore “walking by spirit” would mean living in harmony with its leading or under its guidance. Such a walk would be distinguished by uprightness in attitude, word, and deed.

The Greek verb for “carry out” (*teléo*) means “finish,” “complete,” or “end.” Whereas a believer may come to have wrong desires, the Holy Spirit will prevent such from coming to fruition, provided that the individual continues to yield to the spirit’s influence. This does not happen automatically. The believer must, as Paul said, “walk by spirit,” which necessitates a determined effort to cooperate with the guidance of God’s spirit. While thus walking or living, believers will not be carrying out desires of the sinful flesh (fallen human nature).

Galatians 5:17

Presenting the reason for his previous statement, Paul continued: “For the flesh desires [what is] against the spirit, but the spirit [what is] against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, in order that you may not do what you wish.”

In this case, the initial conjunction *gár* (for) serves to introduce why those walking by the spirit would not be carrying out desires originating with the sinful flesh. The word *gár* here has the sense of “because.” Since what the flesh and the spirit want stand in direct opposition to each other, the spirit-directed believer does not yield to the lusts and passions of fallen human nature.

The preposition *katá* is an indicator of direction. In this case, as evident from the context, the word points to an opposite direction and, therefore, signifies “against.” As a marker of contrast, the conjunction *dé* (but) points to the fact that the spirit wants what is the very opposite of what the flesh desires. There is an irreconcilable enmity between the sinful flesh and the spirit of God. Thus, within the believer a conflict rages. Fallen human nature tries to assert itself and regain dominance, whereas God’s spirit opposes the cravings of the sinful flesh. Apparently with reference to this conflict, Paul said, “for these are opposed to each other.”

According to the most ancient manuscript evidence, the apostle used the conjunction *gár* (for) to show why the desires stemming from the sinful flesh and the spirit lead in opposite directions. It is because fallen human nature and God’s spirit are antagonists. The plural pronominal adjective “these” (*taúta*) refers to the flesh and the spirit. Describing the opposition, Paul used the verb *antíkeimai*, which means to be “hostile toward” or “oppose.”

The expression *hína* (in order that) evidently is to be regarded as an indicator of result. Thus, the words “in order that you may not do what you wish” point to the outcome of the conflict between the sinful flesh and God’s spirit. When yielding to the direction of God’s spirit, the believer does not do what the sinful flesh craves. On the other hand, though desiring to do what is right, the individual, in a time of weakness, may give in to the powerful craving of fallen human nature. Because of possessing only an imputed righteousness, the believer’s walk is not flawless. (Compare Romans 7:21–25.) The antagonism of flesh and spirit is such that, depending on what the individual does, the result will always be diametrically opposed to the powerful influence of either the flesh or the spirit. Both simply cannot be satisfied at the same time.

Notes:

The reading of P46 (c. 200) appears to be, in the second occurrence, *gár* (for), as is that of fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and the original text of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus. Many other manuscripts, though, read *dé* (but).

After *há* (what), manuscripts vary in reading either *eán* or *án*, both of which particles are indicators of contingency and, in this context, equivalent terms.

Galatians 5:18

Having emphasized the role of God's spirit, Paul shows how this affects the relationship of believers to "law." "But if you are led by spirit, you are not under law."

It seems that *δέ* (but) serves to contrast the consistent effect of being led by spirit with the uncertain outcome of the conflict between flesh and spirit that differs from the wishing. To be "led" by spirit means to be guided by or to be under the influence of God's spirit.

Being holy or pure, that spirit could never be the source of any attitudes, words, or actions that require the restraints and penalties of any law or legalistic system. The purpose of law is to define wrongdoing and to restrain it by enforcing penalties for infringements. Law does not produce upright people but simply serves to restrain lawlessness. Because believers do not possess the fullness of righteousness, their being under law would mean being subject to it and its penalties for disobedience. As Paul pointed out earlier in his letter, however, believers are not under the control of law and in the position of condemned slaves by reason of failure to live up to it. They are a free people. Although the word law (*νόμος*) is not preceded by a definite article and so could refer to any law, the reference is doubtless to the Mosaic law.

Instead of being under the control or power of the Mosaic law, believers have a more powerful guiding force affecting their conduct. Unlike law which imposes requirements upon the individual, God's spirit produces results within the believer's deep inner self. The Holy Spirit thus accomplishes what no legalistic system can, namely, the transformation of the inner self, leading to the abandonment of God-dishonoring conduct.

5: 19-26. Acts of the sinful nature vs. fruit of the Spirit

Verses 19-21. The acts of the sinful nature listed.

Galatians 5:19

Paul next lists actions that must be attributed to the sinful flesh. "But the works of the flesh are manifest, which are sexual immorality, impurity, indecency."

Because the conjunction *δέ* is not viewed as introducing a contrast, it is commonly rendered "now" or left untranslated. If, however, the meaning is "but," the contrast would be between being led by spirit (which results only in good) and the ruinous works of the flesh.



Part of the extensive remains at Perge, six miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

Only bad results from the works of fallen human nature. Accordingly, it is manifest or obvious that sinful flesh is the source of such “works,” deeds or acts. “Sexual immorality” is a rendering of *porneía*, which term embraces every kind of illicit sexual intercourse. There is considerable manuscript evidence, however, for the separate listing of *moicheía*, meaning “adultery.” The word *akatharsía* signifies “uncleanness,” “filthiness,” “impurity,” and here likely relates to sexual wrongs. This term is followed by *asélgeia*, which is descriptive of shockingly indecent behavior. The word may be defined as “licentiousness,” “debauchery,” “sensuality,” “insolence,” or “unbridled lust.” In this case, too, the apostle may have meant sexual sins.

Note: Many manuscripts include *moicheía* (adultery), but this word is not found in Codex Vaticanus, the original reading of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and a number of later manuscripts.

Galatians 5:20

Paul continued listing “works of the flesh,” “idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, [outbursts of] rage, [deeds of] selfishness, divisions, factions.”

Closely associated with the previously mentioned sexual wrongs is idolatry (*eidololatría*), the “service of idols.” By means of representations made of wood, stone, or precious metals, gods and goddesses were venerated and supplicated. Ceremonial prostitution often formed a prominent part of the religious ritual. (Numbers 25:1; 1 Kings 14:23, 24; Romans 1:20–27)

The term *pharmakeía*, in its basic sense, means “druggery,” the use or administering of drugs. Evidently because sorcerers employed drugs in connection with their occult art, *pharmakeía* designated the practice of magic or sorcery. A concomitant of idolatry, sorcery gave the appearance that nonexistent deities, represented by images, had power and could inflict injury or bestow blessings.

Apparently to indicate repeated manifestations of “enmity” or “hostility,” Paul used the plural of *échthra* (*échthrai*). The word conveys the sense of “hate” and so is the opposite of “love” (*agápe*). At Genesis 3:15 (in the Septuagint), *échthra* is the “enmity” between the woman and the serpent and their respective seeds.

The noun *éris* means “strife,” “wrangling,” or “discord.” In the Septuagint, the verb form *erízo* is found at Genesis 26:35, where the reference is to the peace-disturbing, distressing impact Esau’s wives had on Isaac and Rebekah.

While the word *zélōs* can mean zeal, it here signifies “jealousy,” an envious and contentious rivalry. Jealousy is the antithesis of “love.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Being in the plural, *thymoi* is descriptive of outbursts or fits of rage. Persons given to anger have a disposition that is quick to flare up uncontrollably for temporary periods.

The expression *eritheía* has been defined as “selfishness,” “selfish ambition,” “contention,” and “hostility.” Based on its use in ancient Greek writings, *eritheía* can describe the disposition that puts self first and is willing to use the basest means to achieve its ends. In its plural form (*eritheíai*), the word evidently describes manifestations of this disposition.

A compound of “in two” (*dícha*) and “standing” (*stásis*), *dichostasía* has the literal sense of “standing apart.” It appears here in the plural form (*dichostasíai*) and is commonly rendered “dissensions” and “divisions.” These divisions would be ignoble acts of separation that are rooted in selfishness.

The plural form of *haíresis* (*hairéseis*) has been translated “factions,” “party intrigues,” “heresies,” and “sectarian parties.” Thought to be derived from the verb *hairéomai* (choose), *haíresis* denotes that which is chosen. Accordingly, those who identify themselves with a particular choice in belief and practice constitute themselves a sect, party, or faction. As a work of the flesh, such “choosings” are not based on love of truth.

Notes:

The singular *éris* (strife) has the support of the oldest manuscripts. Many other manuscripts, however, contain the plural *éreis* ([cases of] strife).

Manuscripts vary in reading either *zélōs* (jealousy) or *zéloi* (jealousies).

Galatians 5:21

Completing his list of the “works of the flesh,” Paul added, “envies, drunkenness, carouses, and things like these, [concerning] which I tell you beforehand, as I told you beforehand, that those who practice these things will not inherit God’s kingdom.”

“Envy” is a common rendering of *phthónos*. The plural *phthónoi* (envies) denotes displays of a spirit that begrudges and resents what others are or possess. Position, influence, recognition, possessions, or any perceived advantage (whether real or imagined) may give rise to envy. This “work of the flesh” stems from wanting for self what others have.

The word for drunkenness (*méthe*) is in the plural (*méthai*). This plural form indicates habitual intoxication, or repeated overindulgence in drinking alcoholic beverages.

Drunken bouts are frequently associated with “carouses” (*kómoi*, the plural form of *kómos*). The word *kómos* means “revelry,” “carouse,” or “orgy.” Under the influence of intoxicants, individuals cast off restraints, becoming noisy and boisterous, and often engage in immoral behavior.

The apostle Paul did not intend to make his listing of the “works of the flesh” exhaustive. Those he did mention are examples, the rest being included by the words “things like these.”

Modern versions commonly do not translate *há* (“which”). The word “which” evidently relates to the things Paul had said beforehand in connection with the “works of the flesh.”

The term *prolégo* basically means “say or tell before” (*pró* [before]; *légo* [say, speak, tell]). Since Paul mentioned serious future consequences, numerous

translations render *prolégo* as “warn.” The sense of the expression evidently is that already before the time comes for inheriting God’s kingdom, the apostle had told the Galatians who would not share in the inheritance. This was not the first time that Paul had done so. His words, “as I told you beforehand,” evidently relate to what he had said earlier while ministering to believers in Galatia.

The word *prásso* (practice, do, carry out, or perform) is in the present tense, suggesting a habitual doing. Accordingly, “those practicing these things” are persons habitually carrying out what the fallen flesh craves. Such persons are not led by God’s spirit and simply could not be his sons. (Compare John 8:34–44.) As Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “all who are led by God’s spirit are God’s sons.” (Romans 8:14) Only sons of God share in the inheritance, excluding all practicers of what the fallen flesh craves.

Whereas believers are already in the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Colossians 1:13) and conduct themselves in a manner revealing that they are submissive to him as their king, the reference here is to an inheritance yet to be received. This is evident from the fact that the verb for “inherit” (*kleronoméo*) is in the future tense. In its basic sense, *kleronoméo* means “gain possession of by lot.” Here, however, the word signifies “inheriting” or “receiving as a possession.”

Inheriting God’s kingdom would mean participating in all the blessings and privileges that God’s appointed king, Jesus Christ, shares with his brothers—all of whom are spirit-led sons of God. With reference to that future inheritance, Jesus Christ said to his apostles (in language that accommodated their perception of the kingdom): “At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matthew 19:28, NRSV; compare Acts 1:6.) The Son of God also spoke in advance respecting those who would not inherit the kingdom. “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.” (Luke 13:28, NIV)

Notes:

Many manuscripts also list *phónoi* (murders) either before or after *phthónoi* (envies). The word *phónoi*, though, is not found in the oldest manuscripts—P46 (c. 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.

After *kathós* (as) many manuscripts read *kaí* (here evidently meaning “also”). But *kaí* is not contained in P46 (c. 200) and the fourth-century Codex Vaticanus.

Verses 22-26. The fruit of the Spirit specified

Galatians 5:22

Referring to what God's spirit yields, Paul wrote: "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness."

The conjunction *δέ* (but) evidently serves to introduce a contrast between the debased works originating with sinful flesh and the good fruit produced by God's spirit. Because a variety of acts have their source in fallen human nature, this may be why the "works [*érge*] of the flesh" are referred to in the plural. The "fruit [*karpós*] of the spirit," however, is spoken of in the singular, indicative of a collective whole stemming from the same pure source.

In this context, "love" (*agápe*) denotes an unselfish concern for the welfare of others regardless of their attitude or moral condition. (Matthew 5:43–48) God's spirit enables believers to look at others from the standpoint of persons for whom Christ died and of people they could be—fellow sons of God—and to respond compassionately to genuine needs.

"Joy" (*chará*) here is a gladness or a delight of a spiritual kind. Regardless of distressing outward circumstances, this joy continues because it is based on knowing that one is a beloved child of God and can depend on his care and blessing.

"Peace" (*eiréne*) is an inner tranquillity that comes from enjoying an approved relationship with God. It liberates believers from anxiety about their needs or external circumstances. Never will the heavenly Father fail to sustain his children in their distress. (Philippians 4:6, 7)

Commonly translated "patience" or "long-suffering," *makrothymía* denotes forbearance, self-restraint, or a calmness and steadfastness when facing provocation, injury, or adversity. A combination of *makrós* (long) and *thymós* (temper, rage, or anger) *makrothymía* is the opposite of being easily irritated, quick to flare up in anger, and hasty in retaliating or punishing.

The expression *chrestótes* means "kindness" or "benignity." In the Septuagint, this word often signifies "good" or "moral uprightness." (Psalm 13:1, 3; 24:7; 30:20; 36:3; 84:13; 118:65, 66, 68; 144:7 [14:1, 3; 25:7; 31:19; 37:3; 85:12; 119:65, 66, 68; 145:7]) *Chrestótes* is the opposite of harshness and conveys the sense of a loving and compassionate spirit. (Compare Matthew 11:28–30, where the adjective *chrestós* [kindly] describes the yoke.)

“Goodness” is a rendering of *agathosyne*. This word is descriptive of moral uprightness in attitude, speech, and action. It may also convey the sense of generosity, or a readiness to go beyond what mere duty may require.

In this context, *pístis* apparently does not have the specific sense of “faith.” Not until putting faith or trust in Jesus Christ and the arrangement for having sins forgiven on the basis of his sacrificial death does the believer become a recipient of God’s spirit. Accordingly, the fruit God’s spirit produces would not be the faith in God and Christ that the believer already possesses. Since the other qualities involve actions or responses to persons or situations, *pístis* could include the thought of “fidelity,” “trustworthiness,” or “reliability” in dealing with others. It may also signify “trustfulness,” the opposite of suspicion. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, love “believes [verb form of *pístis*] all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:7) This would include full trust in God and all his promises and dealings. Also, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, fellow humans, especially believers, would be accorded trust or confidence.

Galatians 5:23

Concluding his description of the spirit’s fruit, Paul wrote, “gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

“Gentleness” or “mildness” is the basic sense of *praútes*. This word is descriptive of a mild disposition when responding to and dealing with others even if they are stubborn, belligerent, or demanding. *Praútes* also includes a willing submission to what is right. It is the opposite of harshness, severity, unreasonableness, and anger. Because of being manifest in unfavorable circumstances, *praútes* reveals strength.

Incorporating the word *krátos* (strength), *enkráteia* means “self-control,” the use of strength on oneself. It refers to keeping impulses, passions, and desires in check, restraining oneself from indulging in any kind of excesses or resorting to violent words or actions.

The preposition *katá*, as a marker of direction, here has the sense of an opposite direction and thus denotes “against.” Unlike the “works of the flesh” which are always injurious and have to be proscribed by law, the spirit’s fruit consistently results in good. The admirable qualities making up this fruit do not conflict with any legal code. No law is required to limit or prohibit the qualities for which God’s spirit is responsible. There simply is no law “against such things.”

Note: In a number of later manuscripts, *enkráteia* is followed by either *hagneía* (chastity, purity) or *hypomoné* (patience, endurance).

Galatians 5:24

“But those of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with [its] passions and desires.” The conjunction *δέ* (but) introduces why believers are not under the control or condemnation of a legal code—they are not dominated by the fallen flesh with its associated passions and lusts. In this case, *δέ* seemingly serves to contrast with the implied thought that, unlike what is the case with the fruit of God’s spirit, there is law against the “works of the flesh.”

Being an indicator of possession, the genitive construction “of Christ” (*τοῦ Christou*) denotes belonging to him. Therefore, those “of Christ” are his disciples, enjoying favorable recognition as such and acknowledging him as their Lord in attitude, word, and deed. (Matthew 7:21–23; 25:40, 45)

True disciples of Jesus Christ “have crucified [*stauróō*] the flesh with its passions and desires.” The verb *stauróō* is in the aorist tense and points to something that has happened. (Regarding this verb, see the note and comments on 2:19.) Here used figuratively, *stauróō* refers to the act of deadening the fallen flesh, rendering it inactive or depriving it of controlling power in one’s life. Jesus Christ also spoke figuratively of making the flesh lifeless with reference to wrong desires. “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into [Gehenna]. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into [Gehenna].” (Matthew 5:29, 30, NRSV, footnote) The apostle Paul expressed a similar thought to Christians in Colossae: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5, NIV)

When Paul referred to the “flesh” (*sárx*) in his letter to the Galatians, he meant sinful flesh, or fallen human nature. Any “passion” (*páthema*) or “desire” (*epithymía*) having its source in sinful flesh is contrary to the leading of God’s spirit. Therefore, when believers put to death the flesh, they also crucify fleshly passions and desires. No longer is there life governed by degrading passions and lusts. Whereas *páthema* can denote “suffering,” it here means “passion,” probably of a sexual kind. The expression for “desire” (*epithymía*) can include any “lust,” “craving,” or “longing.”

Note: *Iesoú* (Jesus [genitive case]) is missing in P46 (c. 200) and numerous other later manuscripts. The original reading of fourth century Codex Sinaiticus is *kyríou Christou Iesoú* (Lord Christ Jesus).

Galatians 5:25

Regarding the changed life of believers, Paul continued: “If we live by spirit, also let us walk in line by spirit.”

Being in the present tense, the verb for “live” (*záo*) indicates a continuance of living. The word *pneúma* (spirit) is in the dative case and here apparently signifies that the spirit is the means by which believers live. Their new life as children of God has its source in the spirit. Therefore, the word *ei* (if) serves as an introduction to the logical consequences—the outer life should be a reflection of the new life as sons of God. The expression “walk in line” is a rendering of the verb *stoichéo*. This verb basically means “to move in a row or in order,” as the noun *stoíchos* signifies “row” or “series.” In conjunction with spirit, *stoichéo* denotes living in harmony with God’s spirit, conducting one’s life according to the spirit’s guidance or direction. Again, *pneúma* is in the dative case, indicating that the spirit is the means by which an upright outer life becomes possible.

Notes:

Although the majority of manuscripts have no preposition before *pneúmati* (spirit [dative case]), there is very limited manuscript support from the ninth century for either *en* (in) or *syn* (with).

P46 (c. 200) departs from the majority of manuscripts, omitting *kaí* (here having the meaning of “also”).

Galatians 5:26

For believers to conduct themselves in harmony with the spirit’s leading requires heeding Paul’s admonition: “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

A combination of *kenós* (empty or vain) and *dóxa* (glory or honor), *kenódoxos* is descriptive of conceit, false pride, or an empty, vain or baseless glory. The word *prokaléomai* has the basic sense of “call before” (*pró* [before]; *kaléo* [call]) and refers to a calling of another to fight. It may be defined as “irritate” or “provoke.” To “envy” (*phthonéo*), or to be jealous of, denotes wanting for self what another might have and feeling a strong resentment toward that one. Conceit (a tendency to provoke or irritate others by unkind words or actions) and envy stand in opposition to love. Spirit-led children of God should resist all loveless attitudes and actions. Destructive false teaching, however, disrupts peace and is the breeding ground for conceit, provocation, and envy. In view of the influence of false teachers on the Galatians, the apostle’s admonition was timely.

Galatians, chapter 6

(From the King James Version 1611)

- 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
- 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.
- 4: But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
- 5: For every man shall bear his own burden.
- 6: Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.
- 7: Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
- 8: For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.
- 9: And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
- 10: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
- 11: Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.
- 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.
- 13: For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.
- 14: But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.
- 15: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.
- 16: And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.
- 17: From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.
- 18: Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Amen.



The River Beysehir, near Iconium

Chapter 6

6:1-18. Sanctification in action

Verses 1-6. Dealing with fellow action

Galatians 6:1

The apostle Paul again addressed the Galatians as “brothers,” acknowledging them as beloved fellow sons of God. He then focused attention on those needing spiritual help. “Even if a man be overtaken in some misstep, you, the spiritual ones, set that one right in a spirit of gentleness, watching yourself lest you also be tempted.”

In conjunction with *eán* (if, though, or when), *kaí* may be defined as “even.” A number of modern versions, however, leave the word untranslated.

The word *ánthropos* (man) is not to be understood as applying in a general sense to any man. Its meaning, according to the context, is restricted to a fellow believer.

In its basic sense, the verb for “overtake” (*prolambáno*) denotes “take before” (*pró* [before]; *lambáno* [take]). Here the expression apparently has the sense of being taken or caught by surprise. The misstep, therefore, would not be deliberate but would stem from a failure to be on guard. Accordingly, the word for “misstep” (*paráptoma*) here seemingly has a milder sense than in numerous other passages (Romans 4:25; 5:15–20; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:7; 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13) and may be understood to mean “fault,” “blunder,” “error,” or “mistake.” The related verb *parapípto* has the basic meaning of “fall beside” (*pará* [beside]; *pípto* [fall]).

The “spiritual ones” (*pneumatikoi*) are those whose lives demonstrate that they are being led by God’s spirit. Its fruit would be clearly manifest in their attitude, words, and conduct. Their responsibility toward the erring brother would be to help him recover from his serious mistake in judgment. The verb *katartízo* can mean “repair,” “mend” (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19), “fully instruct,” “fully train” (Luke 6:40), “prepare” (Romans 9:22, Hebrews 10:5), “arrange,” “form,” “make” (Hebrews 11:3), or “equip” (Hebrews 13:21). In view of the man’s fall, he would need to be “set right” or be brought back to a proper condition as a member of Christ’s body, requiring “mending,” “repairing,” or “adjusting.”

Paul admonished the spiritual ones to set such a man right in a “spirit of gentleness.” Instead of being harsh or severe, they were to reflect a mild or gentle disposition. Then the apostle added a specific caution about watching oneself. The word for “watch” (*skopéo*) has the sense of giving careful attention to something. Paul used the second person singular form of the verb *skopéo*, indicating that the focus is on the spiritual one providing the needed aid. Individually, the spiritual ones could not relax their guard with reference to their own conduct, for they were not immune to temptation, or the strong pull of a wrong desire that, if not vigilantly resisted, would lead to their being overtaken in a wrong. A recognition that they, too, could fall in the same manner as the erring one would prevent them from assuming a superior attitude and would contribute toward dealing kindly and lovingly with him.

Note: After *ánthropos*, a number of later manuscripts add *ex hymón* (from among you).

Galatians 6:2

Encouraging mutual concern, Paul wrote: “Carry the burdens of each other, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.”

In view of the admonition he had just given to the spiritual ones, the “burdens” evidently include personal failings that weigh heavily on the individual. These burdens, however, are not necessarily limited to missteps but could be anything

that proves to be a weight—trials, discouragement, disappointments, distress, suffering, and affliction. Through sympathetic identification with their brother weighed down by anything of a painful nature, believers could share in carrying his burden. In this case, Paul did not limit the directive to the spiritual ones, but encouraged everyone to participate in this loving effort. All in the Galatian congregations were to consider what they could do and say that would express concern, care, and comfort. As evident from his words to the Corinthians, Paul displayed this rightly motivated, genuine care. “Is anyone weak? I share his weakness. If anyone brings about the downfall of another, does my heart not burn with anger?” (2 Corinthians 11:29, REB)

The commandment that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples was for them to love one another as he had loved them. (John 13:34) Additionally, by the example he set and by what he taught, Jesus revealed the kind of care, concern, and compassion that his disciples should have for others. In the fullest sense, therefore, the example and teaching of God’s Son constitute his law. Accordingly, when believers lovingly respond to one distressed by a burden, they fulfill or carry out what Jesus Christ commanded. They also reveal that they are not self-centered, concerned only about their own or immediate family’s problems and cares.

Galatians 6:3

Evidently with reference to an attitude that would not be conducive to one’s carrying the burden of another, Paul said: “For if anyone considers [himself] to be something, though being nothing, he is deceiving himself.”

The conjunction *gár* (for) indicates that what follows relates to the admonition to be mutually supportive in fulfillment of the law of Christ. The focus is on the disposition that would stand in the way of one’s acting in harmony with this law.

When an individual imagines himself to be truly a somebody, not recognizing personal limitations and failings, he cannot possibly respond in a kind, sympathetic way to those carrying heavy “burdens.” Blind to his own pathetic state, such a prideful person would not have come to appreciate how very much loving assistance from genuinely concerned believers can mean. Not having experienced firsthand the benefit of kindly support, he would not be particularly moved by the distress of others.

Since believers enjoy only imputed righteousness, they should of necessity be aware of personal failings and have an ardent desire for the absolute righteousness that is yet future. Additionally, no one is immune to the problems and trials that are a part of life in a sinful world. Thus, the person who

“considers himself to be something” is but a frail, helpless, and sinful human—in reality, “nothing.”

In imagining himself to be something, he is guilty of a great self-deception, a delusion. The Greek word for deceive (*phrenapatáo*) conveys the sense of deluding one’s mind (*phrén* [mind]; *apatáo* [mislead, deceive]). An example of such prideful self-deception was the situation of the congregation in Laodicea toward the close of the first century. To that congregation, God’s Son directed these words: “You say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Revelation 3:17, NRSV)

Note: Instead of the usual *ei gár* (if for [that is, for if]), fragmentary P46 (c. 200) appears to read *eíper* (if indeed).

Galatians 6:4

Instead of an evaluation of self that is a mere delusion, the apostle points to what can rightly be examined: “But let each one test his own work; and then, with reference to himself alone, he can take pride, and not with reference to another.”

Paul introduced the contrasting thought with the conjunction *dé* (but). The work to be carefully examined or tested is evidently the whole of one’s activity. In the phrase *eis heautón mónon* (into himself alone), the *eis* (into) evidently has the sense of “with reference to.” (Compare Acts 2:25, where *eis* is used similarly.) It is only “with reference to himself alone” that the individual may take “pride” (*kaúchema*, also meaning “ground for boasting”) in “work” that examination or testing reveals as good. On the other hand, any feeling of satisfaction derived from making a comparison with the activity of someone else would have the wrong basis. As Paul said, “not into another.” Again, the word *eis* (into) denotes “with reference to” or “in comparison with.”

Notes:

Though omitted in P46 (c. 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, *hékastos* (each one) is found in the majority of manuscripts.

Fragmentary P46 (c. 200) omits the second *kaí* (and), thus departing from the reading of the majority of manuscripts.

Galatians 6:5

Pointing to the reason for not drawing a comparison with another person and then making one’s perceived superior accomplishment the ground for boasting, Paul added, “for each [one] will carry [his] own load.” The preposition *gár* (for)

is an indicator of reason. Previously (5:1), the apostle had used the term *báros* (burden) but here employed the word *phortíon* (load). Whereas *phortíon* could be understood to be more specifically a load of responsibility, this is not necessarily the case. The expression could denote any type of load that the individual must carry. No human knows the true nature of another person's load, and how it is affecting that one's activity. So there is no valid basis for comparing one's own work with that of another and then using the results of this flawed comparison as the ground for personal boasting.

Galatians 6:6

Although believers individually have their personal "load" to bear, they were not to neglect their duty toward those who were teaching in the congregation. "But the one being instructed [in] the word should share in all good [things] with the [one] doing the instructing."

In the Greek text, the first word is the imperative of "share" (*koinonéo*), indicating that this sharing is obligatory—a responsibility that should or must be assumed. The conjunction *dé* (but), therefore, appears to contrast the "load" that must be borne individually with the duty to respond appreciatively to those who teach. Believers were not to become so preoccupied with carrying their own "load" that they forgot about the needs of their teachers.

Being in the present tense, the passive participle of *katechéo* (instruct, teach) indicates that ongoing instruction or teaching is being received. In this context, *katechéo* apparently refers to oral teaching, not just "informing" (a sense that the word can also have). The one benefiting is being instructed or taught "the word." This "word" (*lógos*) evidently is to be understood to designate God's "word" or "message," with particular reference to the glad tidings about Jesus Christ.

The active participle of *katechéo* is also in the present tense and refers to the one doing the instructing or teaching. While the sharing of "all good things" with this one could include responsive spiritual expressions prompted by the teaching received, it doubtless relates to sharing food and other necessities with the teacher. In order to devote himself fully to instructing others, the teacher had to limit the amount of time he spent in working for life's necessities. Therefore, the one being taught should rightly assume his responsibility to provide material assistance—"good things"—to the one doing the teaching. A similar thought was expressed by Paul in connection with the contribution of non-Jewish believers for their poor Jewish brothers. The apostle wrote: "Macedonia and Achaia have resolved to raise a fund for the benefit of the poor among God's people at Jerusalem. They have resolved to do so, and indeed they are under an obligation to them. For if the Jewish Christians shared their spiritual treasures

with the Gentiles, the Gentiles have a clear duty to contribute to their material needs.” (Romans 15:26, 27, REB; see also 1 Corinthians 9:6–14 and 1 Timothy 5:17.)

Verses 7-9. Sowing to the Spirit

Galatians 6:7

Next, Paul gave a warning: “Be not deceived, God is not [to be] mocked; for whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap.”

The Greek word *planáo* can signify “deceive,” “lead astray,” or “cause to wander.” Possibly because he had earlier discussed lovingly coming to the aid of a man overtaken in a misstep, the apostle wanted to make it clear that this did not diminish the gravity of sin nor excuse giving in to the desire of the sinful flesh. In that case, Paul’s warning would be that believers should not deceive themselves respecting sin and its consequences. On the other hand, he may have been giving admonition to recognize the seriousness of not fulfilling obligations toward others. Because of not being guilty of gross acts of sin, the individual could deceive himself, wrongly concluding that he was divinely approved while he was actually in line for adverse judgment on account of his sins of omission. (Compare Matt. 25:41–46.)

Drawn from the word “nose” (*myktér*), the verb for “mock” (*mykterízo*) conveys the thought of “turning up the nose,” making light of someone or something. While humans can make a fool of others by resorting to deception, they cannot do so with reference to God. No pretense or plea of supposed ignorance will fool him. The real motives for action or inaction cannot be concealed from the Most High or justified by any kind of argument or reasoning that could cause him to accept a lie. The inspired proverb expresses this sobering thought: “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?” (Proverbs 24:11, 12, NIV)

Because God is not to be mocked, the end result will always correspond to whatever course was actively pursued. Just as seed that is sown never produces anything other than its kind, so moral wrongs will never yield moral good. What is reaped at harvesttime will consistently be exactly what had been sown earlier.

Note: Instead of *toúto* (this), a number of manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200), read *taúta* (these [things]).

Galatians 6:8

Building on the principle of sowing and subsequent reaping, Paul continued: “Because the one sowing with reference to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who is sowing with reference to the spirit will reap life eternal from the spirit.”

“Sowing” denotes following a particular course of action. The preposition preceding “flesh” and “spirit” is *eis* (into). Because the flesh and the spirit exert powerful influences respecting the choices made, they are here evidently more than just passive fields for doing sowing. It appears preferable to regard *eis* as meaning “with reference to” or “with respect to.” Thus, the flesh and the spirit may be regarded as objects of the sowing. It is a sowing for the flesh or for the spirit. The “one sowing with reference to his flesh” is pursuing a way of life that yields to his sinful flesh or fallen human nature. Evidently because the flesh is not that of someone else, the apostle used the expression “into the flesh of himself” (*eis tén sárka heautóu*), that is, the individual’s own sinful flesh. Because the flesh craves to be satisfied without regard for the eventual hurtful consequences to the individual or to others, nothing good can come from it. Instead, at harvest time, the sower will reap “corruption from the flesh.” His fallen human nature will prove to be the source of his ruin. In view of the contrast with “life eternal,” “corruption” (*phthorá*) here evidently is to be understood as the very opposite—the eternal ruin from which there is no recovery. The reference apparently is to the ultimate end of a life controlled by the sinful flesh. It is a life where the individual’s thoughts, words, and actions are always subservient to the lusts and passions of his fallen human nature.

When, on the other hand, the spirit of God is allowed to motivate one’s attitude, thoughts, words, and actions, the result is “life eternal.” This is the real life, not just because it is an age-abiding life, but primarily because this is the kind of life God purposed it to be—a life that flawlessly reflects his image. Although only possessing an imputed righteousness by reason of faith in Jesus Christ and having accepted the atoning value of Christ’s death on his behalf, the “one sowing with reference to the spirit” already enjoys a newness of life. His is a spiritual life no longer dominated by satisfying the cravings of his fallen human nature. In his deep inner self, his longing is for the future absolute righteousness, and so his “sowing” harmonizes with the spirit’s direction. Therefore, he will reap “life eternal from the spirit,” this life having its source in God’s spirit.

Galatians 6:9

Continuing to encourage the right kind of “sowing,” Paul wrote: “But in doing good let us not give up, for [in] due time we will reap, [provided] we do not tire out.”

The Greek word commonly rendered “good” is *kalós* and denotes that which is right, noble, or praiseworthy. In the context of bearing the “burdens” of fellow believers, *kalós* evidently applies to moral good that benefits others. Since the participial form for “doing” (*poiéo*) is in the present tense, the thought conveyed is that of continuing action. Believers were not to “give up” (*enkakéo*), become discouraged, or tire out in extending aid to those in need. Faced with their own trials, difficulties, and disappointments, disciples of God’s Son may find it hard to give generously of themselves in response to the distress of others. Nevertheless, if they keep on doing what is right, the time will come when they will “reap” a reward.

Paul introduced the thought about reaping with the conjunction *gár* (for), which functions as a marker of reason for not giving up. This reason is the certainty of reaping. The word translated “due” in a number of versions is *ídios*, meaning “own.” “Time” (*kairós*), when modified by *ídios*, may be understood to mean its own appropriate or proper time (when a mature crop is ready for harvesting).

Although providing positive assurance about “reaping,” the apostle concluded with the conditional element that there be no “tiring out.” The Greek expression for “tire out” is *eklyomai*, a compound consisting of *ek* (out) and *lyo* (loose). It here conveys the thought of having one’s strength “loosed,” that is, drained or weakened. In certain contexts, *eklyomai* signifies to reach the point of fainting from exhaustion. (Matthew 15:32; Mark 8:3) Christian service is not something confined to occasional spurts of activity. It is a way of life. Lest there be no reaping of a reward, believers need to give serious attention to the admonition not to tire out or grow weary in doing what is right or beneficial.

Verses 10-13. Manifesting spirituality

Galatians 6:10

Building on the admonition already given about doing good, the apostle said: “So, then, while we have time, let us do good toward all, but particularly toward members of the household of the faith.”

The words *ára oún* (so then) point to the action to be taken in view of what Paul had just stated. “While,” as long as, or whenever the “time” (*kairós*), opportunity, or occasion existed, the Galatians were being encouraged to “do good toward all,” or “work” (*ergázomai*) for the “good” (*agathós*) of all. By using the expression for “we have” (*échomen*), Paul included himself. Disciples of Jesus Christ are not to blind themselves to the needs of fellow humans. They have a duty to respond in a loving, caring way to *all* persons.

Nevertheless, “members of the household of the faith” have a prior claim. The apostle introduced this aspect with the contrasting *dé* (but) and the adverb *málista*, meaning “particularly,” “primarily,” “especially,” or “above all.” This adverb is a superlative form of *mála*. In its three occurrences in the Septuagint, *mála* serves as an intensifier and has the sense of “indeed.” (2 Samuel 14:5; 1 Kings 1:43, 2 Kings 4:14)

“Members of the household” is a rendering of the plural form of the word *oikeíos* (from *oikía*, [house, household]). The relationship of believers as household members is not based on fleshly ties. Instead, theirs is a household or family of “the faith” (*pístis*)—the faith that has Jesus Christ as its object. All of them are sons of God and brothers of Christ. In view of their being members of the same spiritual family, believers have a special obligation to come to the aid of one another.

Galatians 6:11

At this point, Paul apparently called attention to his style of writing: “See what large letters I have written with my hand.” The imperative form of *idoú* (see) indicates that the apostle wanted the Galatians to take special note. In Greek, the word *grámma* can refer either to a letter of the alphabet or a writing. Since, however, the letter which the apostle wrote to the Galatians was not exceptionally long, evidently the descriptive *pelíkos* (what large, how great, or how large) is to be understood as applying to the size of the “letters” that Paul used and not the “writings.” Some commentators have concluded that the apostle may have used large letters for emphasis or that this is an indication of his poor vision. Nothing in the context, though, gives support to either conjecture. Moreover, the size of a person’s handwriting is not really an indicator of limited eyesight, as many people with good vision naturally use large letters. It may well be that the apostle’s object was to emphasize that the letter was indeed a genuine one from him, as evident from the distinctive style of writing.

Based on other letters, Paul commonly used an amanuensis to do the actual writing. (Romans 16:22; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17) Therefore, his calling attention to the size of the letters may indicate that, from this point onward, he used the writing implement (probably a pointed, slit reed pen) to complete the letter. There is also a possibility that the reference to the size of the letters applies to the entire epistle, which would mean that he did not use a penman in this case but wrote everything himself.

Although Paul was then in the process of writing with his own hand, the aorist tense of *grápho* (write) is perhaps to be understood as indicative of a past event from the standpoint of the recipients of the letter.

Galatians 6:12

Again focusing on the proponents of circumcision who had disrupted the peace of the congregations in Galatia, the apostle wrote: “As many as want to make a good showing in [the] flesh, these try to force you to get circumcised, only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

Being in the present tense, the verb for “want” (*thélo*) expresses a continuing wish or desire. According to the context, the object of this desire was to preserve an outward appearance that would placate the unbelieving Jews so that they would not become hostile.

The verb for “make a good showing” (*euprosopéo*) is a compound of *eú* (well, good, or fair) and *prósopon* (face). Since the expression *prósopon* often denotes the appearance (Matthew 16:3; James 1:11), *euprosopéo* conveys the thought of making a good appearance or showing. It was an appearance or showing “in flesh,” that is, relating to that which is external and unspiritual. This outward appearance was designed to look good to the unbelieving Jews.

Paul did not specify the manner in which the advocates of circumcision tried to “compel” or “force” (*anankázo*) a non-Jewish believer to get circumcised. Their arguments for circumcision likely included the misapplication of the Scriptures and claims respecting teachings of the apostles in Jerusalem. They may also have resorted to subtle pressure, implying that free association in all respects with Jewish believers depended on circumcision because the fullness of divine approval or acceptance was only possible for persons who were circumcised.

The real motivation of the proponents of circumcision was self-interest—the desire to avoid being persecuted by the unbelieving Jews. For these unbelieving Jews, the obstacle was the “cross [*staurós*] of Christ,” not the implement on which he died, but what the death of God’s Son signified (see note on 2:19 regarding *staurós*). They were enraged about the teaching that uncircumcised non-Jews could enjoy complete forgiveness of sins and an approved standing with God. To be placed on the same level as non-Jews insofar as what was needed for divine acceptance—faith in Jesus Christ and the sin-atonement value of his death—was highly offensive to them. Although beliefs among first-century Jews varied considerably (Acts 23:8), they were united in the view that no uncircumcised non-Jew could enjoy God’s approval. Close association with uncircumcised non-Jews was, in fact, unlawful and defiling. (John 18:28; Acts 10:28) Therefore, by representing themselves before unbelieving non-Jews as being of the same persuasion as they in teaching that divine approval was dependent on circumcision and obedience to all the other requirements of the Mosaic law, the proponents of circumcision sought to avoid persecution.

Note: Manuscripts differ in the order of some of the words. Additionally, P46 (c. 200) follows the abbreviated form of Christou (‘‘of Christ’’), with the abbreviated form of Iesou (Jesus [genitive case]).

Galatians 6:13

Further drawing attention to the wrong motives of the troublemakers, Paul said: ‘‘For not even those who are circumcised keep [the] law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they might boast in your flesh.’’

Modern translations commonly leave the conjunction *gár* (for) untranslated. This conjunction does, however, serve to introduce a statement confirming that the primary reason for advocating circumcision was the desire to avoid persecution.

If preserving the original reading of the text, the word *peritemnómenoi* (the present tense participial form of the verb *peritémnō* and meaning ‘‘are circumcised,’’ ‘‘are being circumcised’’) evidently is not limited to non-Jews who accepted circumcision and then became active proponents of the practice with a view of gaining the fullness of divine approval. Rather, this term (as suggested by the context) would apply to all advocates of circumcision who were themselves circumcised.

The fact that the proponents of circumcision did not truly keep the law proved that their desire to impose circumcision and the accompanying requirements of the law did not have a noble purpose. Emphasizing their failure, the apostle (according to most manuscripts) used the strong negative *oudé* (not even).

Although there is no definite article in the Greek text before ‘‘law,’’ the linkage with circumcision indicates that the reference is to God’s law given through Moses. As sinful humans, the advocates of circumcision did not and, in fact, could not have lived up faultlessly to the law even if they had been sincere in their efforts. Yet, they were insistent on imposing on others the very law that they themselves did not observe as required of them. Thus, what they themselves failed to obey and what they endeavored to induce others to follow proved to be wholly inconsistent.

The apostle introduced what these troublemakers desired with the conjunction *allá* (but), a strong indicator of contrast. Their reason for wanting others to get circumcised was so that they could ‘‘boast.’’ The basis for their boasting or taking pride was the ‘‘flesh’’ of non-Jews whom they had converted to their persuasion, for that ‘‘flesh’’ bore the visible marks of circumcision. In view of their desire to escape persecution, the proponents of circumcision probably pointed to their success in getting non-Jews to accept their view as proof of

having even greater zeal in honoring Moses and the law than did the unbelieving Jews. There was nothing spiritual or praiseworthy about their boasting. It was a mere taking of pride in having succeeded in getting non-Jews to bear the mark of circumcision “in [their] flesh.”

Notes:

Instead of *oudé* (not even) found in the majority of manuscripts, P46 (c. 200) reads *outé* (not).

Fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, and many other manuscripts read *peritemnómenoi* (“are circumcised,” “are being circumcised” [present tense]). On the other hand, *peritetmémenoi* (perfect tense participial form of *peritémnō* [circumcise], indicative of the circumcision having been undertaken in the past but its results continuing to exist) is found in P46 (c. 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus.

Verses 14-18. The basis of true spirituality

Galatians 6:14

Paul, however, completely rejected their basis for boasting: “But, as for me, may it never happen that I boast of [anything] other than the cross [*staurós*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to [the] world.”

For the apostle, the only ground for boasting or taking pride, was the *staurós* of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Regarding *staurós*, see note on 2:19.) That it was unthinkable for Paul to conceive of any other valid basis for boasting is evident from the words *mé génoito*, “may it never happen.” The focus of Paul’s reference to the *staurós* is not on the implement itself but on what Christ’s death on the *staurós* effected—liberation from the condemnation of sin and an approved standing with God for all who put faith in Jesus Christ and accept his sacrifice for them.

In referring to God’s Son as Lord, Paul acknowledged him as his Owner or Master, the one who had bought him with his precious blood. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ was the guiding principle of his life. Because his whole life centred on Christ—having his Lord’s approval—any kind of boasting based on self was ruled out. Paul only boasted or took pride in what Christ had done for him, and this was accompanied by the humble recognition that everything he had received and had been able to do was completely dependent on grace or favour. (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10; 1 Timothy 1:12–17)

The word that follows the contracted form of *día* (through) is *hoú* and may be rendered “whom” or “which.” When *hoú* is understood to mean “whom,” the reference is to the Son of God. On the other hand, if *hoú* denotes “which,” the antecedent is *staurós*. Either through the Lord Jesus Christ (by reason of being made one with him as a member of his body) or through the *staurós* (acceptance of Christ’s sacrificial death on his behalf), Paul experienced a tremendous change in his life.

The “world” (*kósmos*) may be understood as being the totality of the attitudes, principles, standards, and practices existing in the world of mankind alienated from God. As a zealous adherent to Jewish traditions, Paul had not led a spiritual life. His attitude, goals, and conduct had been patterned according to the prevailing standards among legalistic-minded Jews. At that time, the apostle’s striving was to gain merit with God on the basis of personal effort, which produced a feeling of pride and outright hatred for those who appeared to devalue the cherished traditions. In that state, Paul was of the world and described himself as being “a blasphemer and a persecutor and an arrogant man.” (1 Timothy 1:13) As part of the “world,” he enjoyed its favor and recognition.

Because of the radical change that came about upon his becoming a believer, the “world” of which Paul had been a prominent and respected part ceased to hold any attraction. To him, it was now crucified as something accursed. The depth of his feeling is reflected in his words to the Philippians: “Whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith.” (Philippians 3:7–9, NAB)

On the other hand, the “world” that had once regarded Paul favorably viewed him with extreme abhorrence as an outcast. To those of that “world” he appeared loathsome—as a vile criminal fastened to a *staurós*. Their attitude was expressed in the screams of an enraged mob, “Rid the earth of the man! He is not fit to live!” (Acts 22:22, NJB)

Galatians 6:15

Apparently to introduce a confirmatory reason for not taking pride in anything other than what Jesus Christ accomplished through his sacrificial death, Paul used the conjunction *gár* (for). He wrote, “For neither circumcision is anything nor [is] uncircumcision, but a new creation [counts].”

The apostle had earlier argued strongly that imposing circumcision on non-Jewish believers was wrong. Perhaps, therefore, some could have reasoned that there was value in being in the uncircumcised state. Paul, however, here made it clear that neither the outward sign of circumcision nor the lack thereof provided any advantage or benefit regarding an individual's standing with God. Pointing to what did count, the apostle used *allá* (but), a strong marker of contrast, and added the words “new creation.” Instead of primarily being the opposite of “old” and thus describing something that had newly or recently come into existence, “new” (*kainós*) is indicative of a newness in quality. The “creation” is of a new kind.

This “new creation” is not distinguished by a mark from an operation performed on the physical organism, nor by the absence of such a mark. Instead, the “new creation” comes into being through the operation of God's spirit within the person who puts faith in Jesus Christ and what he made possible by dying sacrificially. Because of the tremendous change in outlook, attitude, and behaviour that God's spirit effects, the believer comes to be a new person. The old self that was controlled by the passions and cravings of fallen human nature ceases to be. (Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:9, 10) Accordingly, what counts with God is nothing external. Rather, it is the inner transformation produced by his spirit and which transformation is manifest in the believer's upright conduct and unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

Notes:

Many manuscripts contain the expanded reading of the text—*en gár Christó Iesoú oúte* (for in Christ Jesus neither). Modern translations, however, generally follow the shorter reading of the passage (*oúte gár* [for neither]), which has the support of P46 (c. 200), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and a number of later manuscripts.

The reading *estin* (is) has the support of P46 (c. 200), the original reading of fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, as well as numerous later manuscripts. On the other hand, many other later manuscripts read (as in Galatians 5:6) *ischyei* (“has strength”).

Galatians 6:16

Emphasizing the importance of recognizing what truly counts, the apostle said: “And as many as will follow this rule—peace and mercy upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”

The verb here commonly translated “follow” is *stoichéo*, which has the basic sense of “moving in a row or in order.” Thus, to follow the rule or precept enunciated by Paul is to let it serve as a guide.

Although the word *kanón* can designate a reed for measuring, it here refers to a “rule,” principle, or a standard for conduct. As evident from the apostle’s previous statement, this guiding principle is that externals mean nothing but that what does count with God is the transformation of the inner life through the operation of his spirit. For “as many as” choose to regulate their attitude, words, and deeds in harmony with this “rule” or standard, Paul prayed that “peace and mercy” be “upon them,” suggesting that this blessing came upon them from above—from God.

“Peace” is a divinely given inner sense of security and calmness that believers enjoy because of knowing that they are approved children of God. As such, they are assured that the heavenly Father will lovingly sustain and care for them in all their trials. (See comments on 1:3.)

The word *éleos* means “mercy,” “compassion,” or “pity.” It is expressive of an active response to a real need. Believers possess only imputed, not absolute, righteousness and, therefore, depend on God’s continued forgiveness of their sins—an expression of his boundless mercy. (Matthew 18:21–35) Additionally, they experience trials and distress. In his compassion, the Most High comes to their aid, sustaining them with his spirit so that their faith does not give out. Never does he permit the situation to develop to the point where faithfulness to him would be humanly impossible. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Only those recognizing that externals are of no value in the eyes of God and that he is the source of what makes it possible for them to be his beloved children are recipients of the needed peace and mercy. A reliance on externals, on the other hand, assigns the ultimate value to self and personal effort, leading to obscuring the reality that the creature is totally dependent on the Creator for everything.

In this context, those being designated as the “Israel of God” depends on how the word *kaí* is to be understood. It may be rendered “and,” “even,” or “also.” When translated “even,” the “Israel of God” is the same group as those designated by the expression *hósoi* (as many as). If, however, *kaí* here has the sense of “and,” two groups would be in view—“as many as” *and* the “Israel of God.” Throughout the Scriptures, a clear distinction is drawn between mere natural descent from Abraham and truly being a member of the “Israel of God.” (Isaiah 6:13; 10:20–22; John 8:37–41, Romans 9:6–13) Thus, Paul perhaps was here limiting his use of the expression “Israel of God” to the believing remnant of natural Israel. In that case, the expression *hósoi* would apply to any believers who choose to follow the “rule” or “standard,” but who would not of necessity

be members of the “Israel of God.” In view of the apostle’s earlier emphasis on their being no distinctions in the spiritual family (3:28, 29), however, this meaning is questionable. A more likely possibility is to regard the word *hósoi* as applying to a part of the entire body of believers making up the “Israel of God.” Regardless of how *kaí* is to be understood, the “Israel of God” is a composite body of people whom God recognizes as belonging to him, all of whom share in the blessing of “peace and mercy.”

Galatians 6:17

At this point, Paul added a personal note: “Henceforth let no one cause me troubles, for I bear the marks of Jesus in my body.”

Whereas the basic meaning of *loipós* is “rest” or “remaining” (Acts 2:37; Galatians 2:13; Ephesians 2:3), the expression *toú loipoú* here has the sense of “for the time remaining,” “henceforth,” “from now on,” or “after this.” So, from then on, the apostle requested not to be submitted to the kind of troubles that he had experienced on account of false teachers in the congregations of Galatia.

The term that has been rendered “cause,” “make,” and “give” is *parécho*—a compound consisting of *pará* (beside, near) and *écho* (hold). Accordingly, the thought of giving is expressed by the basic idea of holding something out or toward the recipient. In this particular context, however, the term *parécho* denotes “causing one to experience something.”

Paul had been caused to experience troubles, and this he wanted to stop. The word *kópos* can mean “labor” or “toil,” particularly from the perspective of its wearying or exhausting nature. (Genesis 31:42, LXX; 2 Corinthians 11:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:9) In this case, the main focus of *kópos* is on the wearying aspect and so it has the sense of “trouble.” As evident from the apostle’s letter, the troubles he had to bear included insidious attacks on his apostolic authority and the undermining of his devoted service in helping the Galatians spiritually, resulting in his having great concern for their eternal welfare. Since the false teachers were responsible for the stress he had experienced, Paul evidently directed his words to anyone who did and might start to proclaim something other than the true “glad tidings” and thereby endanger the spiritual well-being of those who might lend an ear to error.

The apostle introduced the reason for making his imperative statement with the preposition *gár* (for). This reason was the “marks” he bore “in his body.” The word *stígma* is the designation for a “brand mark,” which mark is indicative of ownership. Evidently the “marks” came to be on Paul’s body on account of his being an apostle of Jesus Christ. These “marks” also proved that he was owned by God’s Son, thereby clearly establishing whose servant he was. When Paul

wrote to the Galatians, he had already experienced much of what he enumerated in his second letter to the Corinthians: “Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Cor. 11:23–28, NIV) Especially the stoning at Lystra and the beatings to which Paul was submitted must have left scars on his body. (Acts 14:19; 16:22, 23, 33) Because these “marks” were a direct result of Paul’s being in the service of his Lord, they were indeed the “marks of Jesus.” How wrong it therefore was for anyone to cause him the kind of troubles for which the false teachers were responsible!

Note: Manuscripts vary in reading *Iesoú* (of Jesus), *Christoú* (of Christ), *kyríou Iesoú* (of Lord Jesus), *kyríou Iesoú Christoú* (of Lord Jesus Christ), *kyríou* (of Lord), and *kyríou hemón Iesoú Christoú* (of our Lord Jesus Christ).

Galatians 6:18

Paul concluded his letter with the prayerful expression, “The favor of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit, brothers. Amen.” In this context, “favor” (*cháris*) apparently includes the approval of Jesus Christ. Believers recognize him as their Lord who bought them with his precious blood and demonstrate their submission to him by letting his example and teaching guide their attitude, thoughts, words, and actions. His favor is bestowed upon believers in the form of aid, guidance, and protection. For the Galatians to have Jesus’ favor on their spirit would have assured them of all the blessings believers share in common. The “spirit” of the Galatians would be their disposition or prevailing attitude. It would be the motivating power at work in their inner life, manifesting itself to others in their daily conduct.

Although the Galatians had erred in allowing themselves to come under the influence of false teachers, Paul, to the very end of his letter, addressed them as “brothers,” fellow sons of God and brothers of Christ. He accepted them as beloved members of the same spiritual family. Evidently because this was a

general letter for all the congregations in Galatia, Paul did not include any personal greetings to individuals.

As was common when invoking a blessing on others, the apostle used the word “Amen.” This expression means “surely,” “truly,” or “so be it.”

Note: A number of manuscripts, including fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, omit *hemón* (our).



The Western Wall or Wailing Wall, at Jerusalem



Galatians Questions and Answers

Important Note

The author of this study does not expect anyone to answer every question in this long list, and even refer to all the biblical references presented in the following pages. Only choose the questions, that you think might be helpful to you. The long questionnaire and answers only intend to satisfy as many students as possible in the solving of their problems along this study. Why so many questions and answers, because our human difficulty is that we not always take things seriously. We hope for name and fame, but if we see that we must climb up a tall tree in order to get what we want, then we lose interest. In our life at the side of Jesus we want to please God, but before we realise the benefits of our faith, we have to do a number of things. If we feel inwardly the value of Christ-realisation in our life, then the so-called hardship that we go through is nothing. If we value the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then we are bound to walk along that path. The road, the Christian life, is long and can be arduous, but if we constantly keep the goal in our view, and walk along the “Saviour’s road”, then we will surely reach our destination.

Galatians 1:1. What is the underlying lesson in what Paul says here?

This teaches that no group of men, nor any individual, passes on the ministry gifts Christ gave to the church (Eph 4:7-16). Nobody can be ordained an apostle - or any other of these offices - based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even bible college training. Ministry offices are divine appointments (Ac 13:1-4). This is the biblical pattern for being raised up to high office in the New Testament church. We learn from this that men must first prove their faithfulness to God in lesser areas of ministry before God promotes them to leadership positions in the church (Mt 25:14-23). Although Paul was a chosen vessel of God, he was not sent out as an apostle until after he had proved his faithfulness in other areas of ministry first (Ac 9:1-30; 11:25-30). See also comments on Ac 11:27, 13:1-4, 20:17; Ro 11:13; Eph 4:11-12; 1Ti 2:8-15, 3:1-7 and 1Pe 5:1-3.

Galatians 1:2 (A) Who were the Galatians to whom Paul addressed this letter?

Galatia was a Roman province which Paul evangelized on his first apostolic mission journey. This letter is addressed to the churches he founded there (Ac 13:1-4, 13-14, 42-49). One of Galatia's major cities was Lystra, where Paul

miraculously survived a near-death stoning (14:19-22). Many in the church believe that Paul did die; that God raised him up as the disciples "stood around him" (2 Cor 1:8-10). It was his grotesque appearance after the stoning that Paul referred to as his "infirmity of the flesh" in Ga 4:13-14. It was also in the Galatian churches that the first elders in scripture were appointed (Ac 14:21-23).

Ga 1:2 (B) What was the purpose of the letter?

The Galatians who had begun their Christian walk by faith, were now attempting to complete the walk by works. They were deserting the simple gospel of salvation by grace, by which they were saved, for a legalistic substitute gospel of salvation by works (3:1-5; 4:9-11; 5:7-9). Paul feared for the Galatians because the only way anyone can be justified before God is by faith in Jesus and the redemption He has purchased for them with His blood. This is called the doctrine of justification by faith (Ro 3:20-26 with 4:25 - 5:2 and Ga 2:16). The Galatians had turned from faith in the finished work of Christ alone, and were now caught up in all the rites and ceremonies of the old covenant trying to justify themselves before God without Jesus. This is what happened to the Jews. They also rejected Christ, so God rejected them. And this is what will happen to all who try to justify themselves before God without Jesus (Ro 9:30-33). Trying to justify oneself by works is taking away from the gospel of grace, which results in bringing down a curse upon oneself (Rev 22:18-19).

Ga 1:11-12 When did Paul receive the gospel revelation from Jesus?

Paul received the revelation of the gospel from Jesus when he was taken up to heaven soon after he was saved (2 Cor 12:1-7).

Ga 1:15-17 (A) What does Paul mean that God separated him from his mother's womb and called him by his grace - is this not teaching that Paul was predestined to salvation?

No! This simply means that Paul was set apart by God, like every believer in Christ is while still in the womb, for service unto him (Eph 2:10). This is the calling of every New Testament Christian. We are all called to be ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ga 1:15-17 (B) What does Paul mean that he did not confer with flesh and blood after he was saved?

Conferred means consulted with. Paul did not seek instruction or clarification from Ananias or any of the other disciples in Damascus concerning the revelation he had received of Jesus when he got saved on the Damascus road

(Ac 9:3-6, 10-20). Neither did Paul go up to Jerusalem to consult with any of the apostles there. He stayed in Damascus for a short time after his conversion and then went into Arabia, obviously alone, to learn from God direct. Scriptures do not teach how long Paul was in Arabia, but it was not until three years after he was saved that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter (Ga 1:18-19 with Ac 9:26-30). What Paul is stressing in Ga 1:16-17 is his complete apostolic independence of the Jerusalem apostles. Even when he went back to Jerusalem again fourteen years later, Paul was still most careful to maintain his independence of the apostles there. His fellowship with them was on terms of equality. He was not indebted to them for anything (Ga 2:1-10 with Ac 15:1-29).

Ga 2:1-9 What was the gospel that Paul preached which he communicated privately to the leaders of the Jerusalem church in V2?

The gospel Paul communicated privately to James, Peter and John etc. in the Jerusalem church was the same gospel Peter and the other preached to the Jews - the gospel of grace. This passage does not teach, as many in the church believe, that there were two different gospels at that time - one for the Jews and one for the Gentiles. It simply means that God had delegated to Paul the responsibility of taking the gospel of grace to the Gentiles, and to Peter, the responsibility of taking it to the Jews. (Ac 15:1-12). This proved Paul's equality with the apostles at Jerusalem; that he was recognized by them in his apostolic authority. Paul's fear that those in authority in the Jerusalem church might thwart his past and present efforts to establish a church free of all old covenant ceremonial rituals was groundless. The apostles together with the elders and the entire Jerusalem church agreed with his gospel completely and prohibited the Jewish Christians from trying to impose the law of Moses upon the Gentiles (Galatians 2:2 with Ac 15:22-31). Paul's meeting with the apostles in the Jerusalem church was a milestone in Christianity. It resolved the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone. Until the question of Gentile circumcision was settled here, many Jewish Christians believed that Gentile converts had to be circumcised like them and keep the Law of Moses, as well as believe in Jesus to be saved (Ac 15:1-2).

Ga 2:11-17 Why did Paul oppose Peter publicly?

Because what Peter did was clearly wrong. Until the Judaizers - the legalistic Jews from the church in Jerusalem came to Antioch, Peter openly fellowshiped with the Gentile Christians. But as soon as the Judaizers came he stopped for fear of what they might do. The Jewish Christians also stopped and it threatened to split the church, turning Jewish and Gentile Christians against each other. Barnabas even got involved too. What Peter did was such a contradiction of the fundamental truth of the gospel of grace, and so hypocritical, that Paul had to

publicly rebuke him. Why it was so hypocritical on Peter's part is because it was Peter whom God used to settle the issue of Jews and Gentiles fellowshiping in the first place (Ac 10:28-35 and 11:1-18). By withdrawing from fellowship with the Gentiles, Peter was obeying the letter of the law he knew had been set aside by God, and was ignoring its significance - that it was a temporary measure for the time of the Old Testament dispensation, to be cancelled at the cross of Christ. Peter knew as well as Paul that no one can be justified before God except by faith alone in Christ, yet he added works to the gospel of grace just to please men - the Judaizers from the Jerusalem church (Ga 2:15-21).

In publicly resisting Peter, Paul showed that his apostolic office gave him the right to stand against any wrong conduct in the church and demonstrated his independence as an apostle. But we also learn from this that Christians must always remain in communion with each other regardless of sectarian affiliation (Luke 9:49-50).

Ga 2:18-21 What fundamental truth is Paul teaching here?

The fundamental truth Paul is teaching here is that no Christian ever has to work to become righteous. Their faith in the finished work of Christ alone has made them righteous before God (Ro 3:20-26 with 2 Cor 5:21 and Eph 2:8-9). Ga 2:18 teaches that if believers try to add works to grace to save themselves, they are sinning. That is what Peter and Barnabas and the Jewish Christians in Antioch did in our previous study (Ga 2:11-17). Once they accept Christ as saviour believers are dead to the law and only follow after the things of God revealed in Christ, who was the fulfilment of the law (Ro 5:20-21; 10:4; Ga 3:19-28). A Christian's life is no longer centred on self, but on Christ. Being crucified with Christ means dying to self and allowing the resurrection power of Christ to indwell us. The life we now live is a result of trusting in Christ alone who died for us. We do not nullify God's grace by self-efforts to attain righteousness, because if we think we can add works to grace for our salvation as Peter and the others did at Antioch, then Christ died needlessly (Ro 4:4-5 and 11:6 with Ga 2:20-21). Also read: Ac 15:1-29; Ro 1:16-17, 3:24-26 (A) and (B); Ga 2:1-9 and Eph 2:8-10.

Ga 3:5 Who is Paul referring to here as he that ministers the Spirit and works miracles among the Galatians?

There are some in the church who believe that Paul is referring to himself here as working miracles among the Galatians by the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in him, and not by the works of the law, when he first came to Galatia to establish these very churches to which he is now writing. However,

that is not correct. The Greek construction of the verse clearly teaches that he who ministered the Spirit and worked miracles among them is the same person - God. The word ministereth is from the Greek word *epichoregeo*, which means to supply abundantly or bountifully - only God can minister spiritual provision like this (Col 2:19; 2Pe 1:10-11). The word miracles is from *dunamis* (1Cor 12:10; 2Cor 12:12). Here we see the reference is to the Holy Spirit conferring miracle working powers upon Paul and others in the New Testament church. What Paul is really asking the Galatians in effect in 3:5 is, does God, who gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you do so because you obey the law, or because you have faith in the gospel message you heard (Ro 10:17).

We also learn from Paul's question in Ga 3:5 that he was referring to the Galatians being baptized in the Spirit, because the point he made was that the miracles wrought among them attested to the empowering of the Holy Spirit, proving that they were saved by grace, not works .

Ga 3:8 What does it mean that the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith preached the gospel to Abraham?

Paul is using a figure of speech here, personifying the scriptures. It conveys the thought that whatever God foresees is expressed in scripture (Luke 4:21; Jn 7:38-42; 19:37; Ro 9:17; 10:11; Ga 4:30; 2 Ti 3:16). The scripture Paul was referring to in Ga 3:8 is Gen 12:3 (Gen 12:1-3 with 18:18 and 28:14). The gospel that God proclaimed to Abraham in effect was that someday a Saviour - Jesus Christ - would arise out of Abraham's offspring through whom by faith, all the nations of the earth would be saved. Abraham rejoiced, looking forward to that day (Jn 8:56). God credited Abraham's faith to believe in Him implicitly to fulfil His promises as righteousness on the basis of Christ's future sacrifice of Himself for Abraham's sin (Ro 4:1-5, 16-17; Ga 3:5-6, 9).

We learn from these scriptures that the only means of salvation is by faith - hearing God's word and believing it - whether under the old covenant or the new (Ro 10:17). God had a plan of salvation which He made known to everyone who ever lived in Old Testament times (Ro 10:18 with 1:18-20). It was predicted by all the Old Testament prophets and while it was independent of the law, it was revealed in all the rites and ceremonies of the law (Jn 5:46 and 1 Pe 1:10 with Ro 3:21-22). The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament pointed to the future supreme sacrifice of Jesus. All those who took part in the sacrificial offerings in the Old Testament actually saw demonstrated continually before their eyes the atoning death of their Saviour. They "heard" over and over the word of God - the gospel of the coming Saviour (He 9:1-15; 10:5-10). Even Abel who lived hundreds of years before the law made a sacrificial offering to

God, proving he knew of the future redeemer (Gen 4:1-4). Abel could only have known about a future redeemer from his father, Adam (Gen 3:14-15). Abel heard the gospel of a coming Saviour and believed it, and got saved (Heb.11:4; 12:24; 1Jn 3:12). Hearing the gospel and believing it is the only way anyone can be saved (Ro 10:8-17).

Ga 3:13 (A) Where is it written" cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree"?

De 21 (De 21:22-23)

Ga 3:13 (B) What is the curse of the law from which Christ died to redeem us?

The curse of the law from which Christ died to redeem us was that which the law pronounced upon those who did not perfectly obey its commands (Pr 3:33; Dan 9:11 and Mal 2:2 with De 28:15-68). There are 54 verses relating to the curse in De 28:15-68 and everything listed in them is what Christ died to redeem us from: poverty, sickness and spiritual death etc. This proves there is bodily healing in the atonement (Isa 53:4-5). We see here that Christ not only became a sin offering on the cross so that we could be forgiven our sins, but that he also bore our sicknesses and our pains, so that we could be healed of them. Griefs and sorrows in V4 means sicknesses and pains. Griefs is from a Hebrew word which means malady, so it should have been translated sickness here too as it is everywhere else in the Old Testament (De 7:15; 28:59, 61; 1Ki 17:17; 2Ki 1:2; 8:29; 13:14; 2Chr 16:12; 21:15, 18-19; Job 30:18; Psa 38:7; 41:1-3; Ecc 5:17; 6:2; Isa 38:9, 12).

In Mt 8:17 the griefs and sorrows of Isa 53:4 are correctly translated as infirmities and sicknesses (Mt 8:16-17). Here we have infirmities as the consequence of sickness, as well as sickness itself. Matthew asserts here that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled in the healings Jesus rendered to the sickthat it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah saying, Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. This is not teaching that Jesus completely fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy before the cross and therefore there is no bodily healing in the atonement as so many in the church believe. It teaches simply that by healing the sick during His earthly ministry Jesus was demonstrating that bodily healing is an integral part of the atonement. Sadly though, there are a great many Christians today who do not recognize this truth and cannot obtain their healing as a result. They do not believe that Jesus' healings in His earthly ministry simply foreshadowed the healing in His atoning death (1Pe 2:24).

Peter affirms here that Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross so that as our souls are saved, our bodies are healed. Peter is attesting to this as being an established fact accomplished by Jesus' stripes. The word borne in Isa 53:4 means to lift, bear, carry away, erase, take away. The idea is that of one person taking the burden of another and placing it on himself. If Christ bore our sicknesses then they were taken away in the same sense as sins are taken away, or borne (He.9:28 and 1Jn 3:5). One can be rid of sickness as well as sin on the same basis of prayer and faith in the atonement. We must believe in the provision of bodily healing in the atonement to experience the benefits. All we have to do is believe what the scriptures teach and claim our healing by faith (Jn 19:28-30). When Jesus said "it is finished," just before he died here, he signified that the complete redemptive plan of God which included bodily healing, was fulfilled in His death (Mt 9:1-8). Here we see that bodily healing and forgiveness of sins go hand in hand. They are mutually exclusive benefits in Christ's atoning death. This is irrefutable proof of bodily healing in the atonement. Christ's atoning death was not only for Christians to be contemporaneously forgiven and healed in bible times, but throughout every dispensation since then too, until He comes again. This is the ongoing ministry of the church (Mk 16:18; Jas 5:14-16). See also comments on Mt 8:16-17, 9:1-8 and 1Pe 2:24 and author's study Healing in his book Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.

Ga 3:15-18 What do we learn from what Paul says here?

Here Paul is using the analogy of the covenant God made with Abraham and a legal agreement made between humans to show that once the parties to it ratify an agreement it stands forever - it cannot be annulled or voided. What Paul is teaching here is that the blessings God promised Abraham stand forever too. They were not affected by the law in any way (Ge 12:7). The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until the seed of Abraham - Christ - came to inherit the promise and distribute the blessings to all who receive Him by faith as Saviour (Ga 3:6-16, 19-29). Everyone in Christ, regardless of nationality or sex, is the seed of Abraham and heir of the promise, and every blessing is still valid for today (2 Cor 1:19-20). This includes healing for our bodies as well as forgiveness of sins.

Ga 3:20 What is the teaching underlying what Paul says here?

The law was promulgated by angels through the instrumentality of a mediator - Moses). A mediator is a go-between - one who helps to restore the relationship between two parties, or as in Moses' case, ratify a covenant. However, we see that the promise of grace God made to Abraham was not in the nature of a

contract between two parties and therefore no mediator is required. God acts alone when He promises salvation by grace to whoever will receive it by faith (Ge 22:15-18). This proves that grace is superior to the law. Paul is very careful to point out though that the law was not against the promise. It did not negate God's will for us. It was just not able to impart life to us (Ga 3:21).

Ga 3:28 What does Paul mean here that there is neither male nor female in Christ?

Paul is speaking in spiritual terms here. There will always be distinctions between the races, social classes, and the sexes in the natural realm, but not in the spiritual realm. Men and women are one in Christ and equal in rights and privileges regarding gospel benefits. There is no longer any gulf between Jews and Gentiles, masters and slaves, and male and female. All are one in unity, in rights, and in privileges, and comprise one body, of which Christ is the head (Jn 10:16; 17:11, 20-23; Ro 3:22; 10:12; 12:5; 1Cor 11:7-12; 12:12-14; Eph 1:22-23; 2:11-22; Col 3:11). The only difference between Christians is their function within the body of Christ

(Ro 12:4, 6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11; 28_31; 2Cor 10:13; Eph 4:11; 1Ti 2:12-15; 1Pe 4:10).

Some Christians use Paul's teaching in Ga 3:28 that there is neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus, to justify the ordination of women to public ministry in the church. They do not understand that Paul is simply teaching here that no one is preferred above another as a child of God. God accepts Jews and Gentiles alike, slaves and free men alike, and males and females alike into His family, through faith in Christ (1Cor 11:11-12). It has nothing whatsoever to do with their function in the church. There is no mandate in scripture for women to be ordained to public ministry in the New Testament church. In fact Paul prohibits women holding leadership positions over men in the church, and he does so on the basis of God's original order of creation, and in the circumstances of the fall of man (1Ti 2:8-15).

Ga 3:29 How are we to understand this?

This sums up Paul's teaching in chapter 3 that believers are justified by faith, not by the works of the law (CP V1-5). As Abraham was justified by faith in God, so too believers are justified by faith in Christ, and are blessed, like Abraham. The law could not save - it only condemned, but Jesus rescued all who want to be saved, by His atoning blood. He became a curse, in fulfilment of scripture, that all who accept Him by faith are redeemed from the curse (CP V10-14). God

covenanted for Gentiles to be justified by faith before the law came down, therefore the law cannot void the covenant and make its promises to Abraham ineffective. The purpose of the law was to keep sinful man in the way of salvation until Abraham's seed - Christ - came. The law pointed to Christ as the supreme sacrifice who would justify all who came to Him by faith, whether they be Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free men, males or females. They would all become children of God through Christ - the heirs of Abraham, and the inheritors of God's covenanted promise.

Ga 4:1-7 How are we to understand this passage?

Here Paul is contrasting believers' lives before they were saved - as children and servants - with their lives after they were saved - as adult sons and heirs of God (Ga 3:24-26). Before salvation, sinful men are like children - spiritually and intellectually immature. They are in bondage to the elements, or spiritual forces, of the world. In God's appointed time He sent Jesus to redeem fallen man and bring Him into sonship. Once repentant sinners become sons of God, God sends forth the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and they are no longer slaves to sin, but heirs of God through Christ (Ro 8:12-17). Abba Father means "Father, my Father" (Mk 14:36). Abba is a sign of unreasoning trust, and the two words together expresses love and intelligent confidence in God. Ga 4:4 also proves the pre-existent Deity of Jesus.

Ga 4:9 What were the weak and beggarly elements Paul refers to here?

The weak and beggarly elements Paul refers to here were the mass of lifeless ordinances that made up the now defunct ritualistic and ceremonial Old Testament Jewish law (Lev 23:1-44; 25:1-55). These ordinances had no power to rescue men from eternal damnation, and they brought no rich endowment of spiritual blessings. The Galatians were allowing the legalistic Judaizers to influence them to observe the Jewish religious calendar instead of holding fast to the freedom from the law that was theirs to enjoy simply by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ (Ga 3:1-3 with 4:17). The Galatians were observing days, months, times and years which the law only required the Old Testament Jews to observe (CP V10 with V21). While Paul is rebuking the Galatian Christians in V10, this is for our admonition also. It is a warning to the contemporary church not to allow itself to be caught up in sabbath keeping or to have regard for any ritualistic ceremony or feast or festival that has no warrant in scripture for New Testament Christians.

Ga 4:13-16 What was Paul's infirmity of his flesh and his temptation which he refers to here?

Many Christians in the contemporary church believe that Paul's infirmity of the flesh to which he refers here was a chronic illness, but that is not correct. It was his physical appearance after his near-death stoning which happened in Lystra soon after he and Barnabas took the gospel to Galatia on his first apostolic mission journey (Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20). The expression my temptation which was in my flesh (in Ga 4:14) referred to Paul's test of faith - the stoning - which he had just endured. His physical appearance was repulsive yet the Galatians did not despise nor reject him, but received him as they would Jesus himself. The stoning Paul received was one of "the marks of the Lord Jesus" he bore in his body (Ga 6:17 with 2Cor 11:23-27 and 2Ti 3:10-11).

Some in the church use Ga 4:15 to prove that Paul had an eye disease that made him hideous to look upon. But what Paul is simply saying in effect is that despite how repulsive he looked when he first witnessed to the Galatians they were so sympathetic to his suffering that they would have plucked their eyes out and given them to him if they could have done so. (This is no more sinister than saying that they would have given their right arm or leg to help him too, if they could have done so.) Paul then goes on to wonder in V 16 if their affections have changed toward him because he always told them the truth. (2Cor 12:7).

Ga 4:21-31 What do we understand from what Paul says here?

Paul was perplexed by the behaviour of the Galatians (CP V20). The Galatians were bent on holding to the letter of the law, yet they did not understand its real significance. It could not save anyone - it only pointed to the Saviour, Jesus, whom the Galatians were now rejecting (Jn 5:39-40 with Ro 1:16-17; 3:20-28; 9:31-33 and Ga 2:16). To enable the Galatians to better understand the law and its purpose, Paul uses the two sons of Abraham as an analogy to distinguish between law and grace (Ga 4:21-23). Ishmael, the son of the bondmaid Hagar, symbolizes the law, and Isaac, the son of the freewoman Sarah, symbolizes grace, or the promise of God. The history of Ishmael and Isaac illustrates the conflict between law and grace. Law and grace cannot co-exist. As Ishmael had to give place to Isaac, so law has given place to grace (2Cor 3:6-15; Ga 3:19-25; 5:1-5; He 7:11-28; 9:1-22; 10:1-18).

Paul also uses earthly Jerusalem, and "Jerusalem which is above", to compare law and grace (Ga 4:24-26). Earthly Jerusalem is an example of the bondage in which those people live who reject grace and look to the law for their justification, whereas "Jerusalem which is above" - the city of the living God;

the heavenly Jerusalem - is an example of the promise of God - salvation by grace through faith - being appropriated by all those who accept Christ as their Saviour. Jerusalem which is above is also called New Jerusalem in scripture. It will be the future habitation of all the redeemed of God, from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great Tribulation (He 11:1-16; 12:18-24; Rev 21:2, 9-10, 24-27. We also learn in Rev 21:2, 9-10 that New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ. For a more detailed study on this subject see comments on Ro 7:4, 2Cor 11:2, Eph 2:15-16(B), 4:13, 5:25-32, Rev 19:7-9 and Rev 21:2 and author's study.

Ga 5:1-8 What do we learn from what Paul says here?

In V1 here Paul is warning the Galatian Christians against turning away from God's grace in Christ and bringing themselves again under bondage to the law (Ac 15:24; Ga 3:10-15). In Ga 5:2-6 Paul teaches that every man who is circumcised in obedience to the Old Testament law is obligated to obey the law in its entirety. They are no longer partakers of God's grace. This teaches that once-saved Christians can forfeit their salvation, because Paul is not referring here to those who had been circumcised in the past, but only to those who were going to be circumcised as a necessity for justification under the law. Christ is not concerned whether one is circumcised or not. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything with Christ. He is only concerned with one's faith that works itself out by love (1Cor 7:18-19; Ga 6:15-16; Col 2:8-12; 3:11-14). Faith which worketh by love means that faith in Christ expresses itself in self-sacrificing love for others (Jn 13:2-17, 34-35; 15:12-17; Ro 5:5; 12:9-10, 15-16; 15:1-3; 1Cor 13:1-7; Ga 5:13-15, 22-26; 6:2; Eph 5:1-2; Php 2:1-5; Col 3:12-14; 1Th 3:12-13; 4:9; He 13:1; Jas 2:14-26; 1Pe 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 2Pe 1:5-9; 1Jn 2:3-5, 9-11; 3:14-19; 4:7-21; 5:1-3; 2Jn 5-6). Most Christians love each other with a mutual, friendly love which is called out of their hearts because they find pleasure in each other's fellowship. But as the foregoing scriptures clearly teach, God calls us to increase that love to an unconditional, self-sacrificial love - the same love wherewith He loves us - for that is the only love that will ensure our place in His eternal kingdom.

Ga 5:9 What is the "leaven" Paul refers to here?

The leaven Paul refers to here symbolizes the harmful effects of the false doctrines of the legalistic Judaizers. Paul called it a "persuasion" because it exerted a powerful and moving influence on the Galatians, hindering them from obeying the truth of God. Leaven in the New Testament is symbolic of any evil influence in the church which, if allowed to remain, can corrupt the whole body of believers (1Cor 5:1-8).

Ga 5:11 What does Paul mean by what he says here?

Paul is setting the record straight once and for all here by pointing out to the Galatians that if he agreed with the practice of circumcision as a necessary prerequisite to salvation as the legalistic Judaizers were apparently saying he did, then the Jews would stop persecuting him. The fact that he was still being persecuted proved that he did not agree (1Cor 15:30; 2Cor 11:26). Then is the offence of the cross ceased means that if Paul did agree with the practice of circumcision as a necessary prerequisite to salvation, then the cross of Christ would no longer be offensive to the Jews (Ro 9:33; 1Cor 1:23; Ga 6:14-15). The offensiveness of the cross to the Jews lay in the teaching that whoever believes in Christ's atoning death on the cross are not subject to the old covenant law. The cross set aside the entire mosaic law, alienating the Jews, because it offered salvation by grace through faith alone without having to do the works of the law (Ro 8:1-4 with Ro 3:20-28; Ga 2:16; Eph 2:8-9).

Ga 5:13 What do we understand by what Paul says here?

Being called into liberty means that Christians have been set free from the dictates of the Mosaic Law which keeps its adherents under bondage because no one can meet the demands the law makes. But Christians cannot use this liberty as a licence to sin (Ro 6:1-2; 1Cor 8:9; 9:19; Ga 5:1; 1Pe 2:16). Christians are to use their liberty to lovingly serve one another (Ga 5:14-15 with Ro 13:8-10; 14:1-15 and 1Cor 13:1-7). Instead of living under the Law of Moses Christians now live under the law of love. The law of love is not a set of written commandments though, it is an ethical and spiritual dynamic produced in the heart of Christians by the Holy Spirit (Ro 5:5).

Ga 5:16 What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

Walking in the spirit is not a mystical exercise in which one falls into some kind of a trance as some think. It simply means walking in conformity with God's word. If we order our manner of life according to God's word we are yielded to the Holy Spirit and will not yield to fleshly desires (Mk 7:14-16 with Ro 8:5-14; Eph 4:20-32; Col 3:1-11).

Ga 5:17 Does this mean that Christians can never overcome the flesh as some believe?

No! That is not correct, as scriptures clearly teach (Ro 6:1-14, 19; 13:13-14; 1Cor 4:16; 11:1; 2Cor 7:1; Eph 4:21-24; 6:11-18; Php 3:17-18; Col 2:6-7; 3:1-

11; He 12:1). Ga 5:17 is one of the most misunderstood scriptures in Christendom. It is used to teach how Christians are victims of the flesh and helpless to live right, but as is plainly evident in scripture that is not correct. Strengthened by the Power of God through His Spirit the Christian overcomes the flesh.

Ga 5:19-21 How are these works of the flesh actually defined?

Adultery is defined as the act of unfaithfulness in marriage when one of the marriage partners engages in sexual intercourse with a person of the opposite sex other than the marriage partner. Adultery violates the marriage union and brings disgrace upon those involved, which will always be with them. It can never be wiped away (Pr 6:27-35). Adultery of course can be forgiven and the offenders restored to grace (1Jn 1:9). Fornication refers to any kind of sexual immorality including illicit sexual activity between unmarried persons, adultery, homosexuality, incest, prostitution etc. (Mk 7:21-22; Ro 1:29; 1Cor 5:1; 6:9-10, 13-18; 7:2; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:3-7; Jude 7; Rev 9:21). If an unmarried man has sex with a married woman he would be guilty of fornication while she would be committing adultery. Fornication is the only ground for divorce sanctioned by Jesus (Mt 5:31-32). Uncleanness here means any moral uncleanness including sodomy, pederasty, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual perversion (Ro 1:24-32; 6:19; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5; 1Th 4:7). Lasciviousness is shameless immorality, licentiousness, wantonness, lustfulness, lewdness, sexual excess, insatiable desire for pleasure, debauchery and perversion in general (Mk 7:21-22; Ro 13:13; 2Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19; 1Pe 4:3; 2Pe 2:7, 18; Jude 4). Lasciviousness is the involvement in that which incites sex sins and lust. That is why Christians must take no pleasure in anything that is sexually explicit, including pornography and such like.

Idolatry is giving pre-eminence to anything other than God. In the Old Testament it referred to the worship of graven images, but for New Testament Christians it could be a person, one's business or job, wealth, power, social status, sport, hobby, even a Christian's ministry etc. Covetousness is idolatry in the New Testament (Eph 5:5; Col 3:5). Covetousness expresses the inordinate desire to make something other than God central in life (Luke 12:15-34 with Mt 6:19-21, 24 and Luke 16:13-15). Idolatry manifests itself in many forms, but whatever form it takes it involves the worship of demons (1Cor 10:14-22). Anyone involved in any form of idolatry is communing with demons, and that is what Paul is warning Christians against here. While New Testament Christians would not worship an idol made out of wood or stone, if they give pre-eminence to anything other than God they are worshipping the demons behind idolatry. Christians must constantly be on guard against making something other than

God central in life because God is totally opposed to idolatry and will not let it go unpunished (1Cor 10:22 with De 32:16-17, 21; Jer 25:5-6; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1Jn 5:21; Rev 21:7-8; 22:15).

Witchcraft is the practice of sorcery, black magic and spiritism. It revolves around the occult and drugs, and involves casting spells, the use of incantations, and the invocation of spirits, which in reality are demons (1Sam 28:7-19). This was not the spirit of Samuel the witch of Endor invoked here, but a demon - a familiar spirit - impersonating Samuel in appearance, knowledge, and prophetically (1Chr 10:13-14). Witchcraft is strictly forbidden in scripture. Yet many Christians today participate in seances. They do not see seances as serious witchcraft, but light-hearted fun. But that is not correct. Seances are serious witchcraft because those who participate in them are communing with demons and God will not tolerate it (Lev 19:31; 20:6; De 18:9-14 with 1Cor 10:21-22; Rev 21:7-8; 22:15). Hatred is bitter dislike or enmity, ill will, intense hostility toward someone; the tendency to hold grudges or be angry at someone. Those who harbour such tendencies will forfeit their place in God's eternal kingdom (1Jn 2:9-11; 4:7-9, 11-12, 16-21).

Variance means causing strife (Ro 13:13; 1Cor 3:3; Php 1:15; 1Ti 6:3-4; contention (1Cor 1:11-14; Tit 3:9); debate (2 Cor 12:20). It does not mean disputing for truth (1Th 5:21; Jude 3). Variance has to do with allowing differences of opinion to lead to animosity. Christians do not have to agree on every issue in the church, but they do have to love one another, and where they do have different points of view, then they must agree to disagree in love (Jn 13:34-35, 15:12-17; 1Cor 13:1-7 with He 12:14-15). Emulations are jealousies, envies and uncurbed rivalries in both spiritual and temporal matters. It is an attitude that will not cooperate with others unless it gets its own way (Ac 13:45; Ro 13:13; Jas 3:13-18). Wrath means a violent motion or passion of the mind; a sudden unrestrained outburst of hostility (Col 3:8). Strife is used here of those who seek only their own. It represents a motive of self interest (Ro 13:13; Php 1:16; 2:3-8; Jas 3:13-16). Seditions are factions or divisions in the church (Ro 16:17; 1Cor 3:3). Heresies in this context are unsound doctrines promoted in the church which are at variance with the pure teachings of scripture (1Cor 11:18-19; 2Pe 2:1).

Envyings are the most base of all degrading and disgraceful passions. They are feelings of ill will and jealousy toward someone else for possessing something which they desire (Pr 14:30 with Ac 7:9; 17:5; Ro 1:29; 1Cor 13:4; Ga 5:26; Tit 3:3; 1Pe 2:1). Murder is the intentional taking of human life (Ex 20:13). The KJV calls it "kill" here, but it should be murder. The verse should read, "thou shalt do no murder". (Mt 19:18). God does not prohibit killing in time of war, or

as capital punishment sanctioned by governments for serious crimes. These are justifiable, but not murder (Gen 9:6; Ro 13:1-5 with Ro 1:29; 1Jn 3:15; Rev 9:21). Drunkenness is the excessive use of alcohol whereby one becomes a slave to drink, a drunkard (Luke 21:34-35; Ro 13:12-14; 1Th 5:6-8). Revellings refer to wild parties and riotous conduct; feastings and drunkenness with impurity and obscenity of the grossest kind; drunken orgies (Ro 13:13; 1Pe 4:3).

There are some in the church who teach that Paul is not referring in Ga 5:19-21 to Christians as the ones involved in these sins, but unbelievers. But that is not correct. Inheriting the kingdom of God is not an option for unbelievers, only believers. Unbelievers will not forfeit the kingdom because they commit these sins, but because they do not believe on Jesus (Jn 3:3, 5, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 20:31; Ro 1:16-17). Furthermore, unbelievers cannot distinguish between walking in the spirit or obeying the lusts of the flesh - only believers can, which Paul had just called upon them to do (Ga 5:16-18 with Ro 8:1). Paul's warning against the sins of Ga 5:19-21 is directed to believers, not unbelievers, and it is a warning to all Christians in all ages who do such things, as it is throughout scripture (1Cor 5:1-12; 6:18-20; Eph 4:20-33; 5:1-8; Col 3:1-10; 1Th 4:1-7; 5:22; He 12:14-16; 1Pe 2:11).

Ga 5:22-23 How is the fruit of the spirit defined?

Love is the deepest possible expression of the personality and of the closeness of personal relations. This is the love that God is Himself, and which believers are enjoined to exhibit to be identified with God (Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8-10; 1Jn 4:7-21). This love is self-sacrificing, patient, kind; never jealous; never haughty or boastful or proud; never acts unbecomingly or indecently; is not selfseeking; is never rude or discourteous; does not become irritated or angry; does not keep account of wrong done to it; it thinketh no evil and does not rejoice in that which is evil, but only in that which is true (1Cor 13:3-7). This love is produced in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Spirit (Ro 5:5).

Joy is the happy state that characterizes the Christian life. It emanates from the Christian's love for God, and the assurance they have that the end of their faith is the salvation of their souls (1Pe 1:8-9). Joy is not to be confused with happiness, which is the outward expression of pleasure, a superficial emotion dependent upon circumstances. Joy is not the result of favourable circumstances; it manifests even under the most extreme conditions (Ac 5:40-42; 16:19-33; 2Cor 7:4, 13; 8:1-5; He 12:1-3; Jas 1:2; 1Pe 4:13). God Himself is the ground and object of the believer's joy (Neh 8:10; Psa 16:11; 35:9; Isa 61:10; Ro 5:11; 15:13; Php 4:4). Peace is the sense of well-being, the spiritual tranquillity that comes from God in the midst of the storms of life. It is an abiding confidence

Christians have in the knowledge that God will sustain them in all their circumstances (Jn 14:27; 16:33; Ro 8:6; 15:13 with Php 4:11-13). It was the peace of God abiding in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Old Testament that enabled them to willingly be consigned to the fiery furnace (CP Dan 3:4-28), and for Daniel to willingly be cast into the lion's den (Dan 6:1-23).

Longsuffering is patient endurance. It speaks of the steadfastness of the soul under provocation; being able to bear long with the frailties and offences of others without anger or thought of revenge (1Cor 13:4-7; 2Cor 6:4-6; Eph 4:1-3; Col 3:12-13; 1Ti 1:16; 2Ti 2:8-10; 3:10; 4:1-2). Gentleness is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing in it all that is harsh and cutting. It is a kindly disposition toward others: gentle, soft-spoken, even-tempered, cultured and refined in character and conduct (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13; 2Ti 2:24-26; Tit 3:1-2). Goodness is that which is morally honourable and pleasing to God; the quality of moral worth in Christians who are ruled by and aim to live their lives in accordance with God's will (Ro 15:14; Eph 5:9-10). Faith (KJV), which should read faithfulness, means unswerving loyalty, commitment, trustworthiness and honesty in all aspects of the Christian life. Christians must remain true to their calling in God, no matter what may befall them (CP Mt 25:14-30; Ro 3:3-4; 1Ti 6:11-12; 2Ti 4:7; Tit 2:9-11). Meekness is a humble, mild, gentle, forbearing disposition. It is not weakness as many think, but controlled strength in gentleness and forbearance; restraint coupled with strength and courage. One can be meek, but actively angry at evil (Mt 5:5; 11:29 with 21:12; 23:13-33 and Mk 3:5; 1Cor 4:21; Ga 6:1; Col 3:12; 1Ti 6:11; 2Ti 2:24-26; Tit 3:2; Jas 1:21; 1Pe 3:15). Temperance is self-control; having mastery over one's desires and passions (Pr 23:1-5; 25:16; Ro 13:14; 1Cor 9:24-27; 1Th 5:6-8; Tit 2:1-10; 2Pe 1:5-10). Adding temperance to knowledge in 2Pe 1:6 suggests that what is learnt requires to be put into practice.

Paul's final comment in Ga 5:23 is that there is no spiritual law in force that can condemn Christians whose lives manifest this spiritual fruit (CP V23).

Ga 5:24-26 What does it mean to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts?

It means to bring our bodies under subjection to God's will; to not yield to fleshly desires. This can only be done under the empowering of the Holy Spirit. One must be completely yielded to the Holy Spirit for this to be accomplished (CP V25 with Ro 8:12-14; 1Cor 9:24-27). Under the spirit's empowering Paul was able to discipline his bodily impulses to such an extent that he no longer yielded to them, lest in so doing he forfeited his place in heaven. To walk in the Spirit means simply to live according to God's word. If we order our manner of

life according to God's word, we are walking in the spirit and will not yield to fleshly desires (Mk 7:14-16; Ro 8:5-11; Ga 5:17; Eph 4:20-32; Col 3:1-11).

Ga 6:2-5 Do not V2 and V5 here contradict each other?

No, although at first glance they appear to. In V2 we are exhorted to bear each other's burden, while in V5 we are told that every man shall bear his own burden. There is no contradiction however. These verses are referring to two different burdens. In the Greek construction of this passage the burden in V2 is a spiritual burden: a heavy burdensome weight pressing on the heart as a consequence of sin (CP V1). In V5, the burden is one's own; it is the personal responsibility we each have towards God for the kind of life we live. It refers to life's routine obligations and each believer's ministry calling (Ro 14:12 with 1Cor 3:12-15). Bearing one another's burden means helping a fallen brother or sister come back to their place in God (Ro 15:1). In so doing we fulfil God's law of love for one another (Ga 5:14 with Jn 13:34-35; Ro 13:8-10 and Jas 2:8).

We are not to condone what the fallen brother or sister has done - Fault in Galatians 6:1 refers to a moral failure, a sex sin - but we are also not to browbeat or condemn them. We are not to think of ourselves as morally superior to them, but are to minister to them in a spirit of gentleness, being aware of our own shortcomings, lest we too fall into sin (Ac 20:35; Ro 12:3; 2 Cor 3:5; Eph 4:2).

Ga 6:7-8 What is Paul defining here?

Paul is defining the law of sowing and reaping here. Just as surely as everything in nature reproduces after its kind, harvests being as sure as sowings, so every one of us will reap what we sow in this life and be solely responsible for our destiny in eternity. This is God's law of sowing and reaping and it applies to every aspect of our Christian walk - to the giving of ourselves, our finances and our time to others; our financial support of the ministry; our moral behaviour and our Christian service. V8 clearly teaches that anyone who claims to be born again of the Spirit of God while consciously sowing to the flesh deceives themselves. It is folly for them to think that they will reap eternal life while they sow to things that will eternally damn them (Psa 15:1 5; Pr 22:8).

There is no difference between the Old Testament and New Testament requirements for salvation. They are the same: only those who sow to the kingdom will reap the kingdom benefits (1Cor 6:9 11; Eph 5:5). Paul is talking to two churches here so this is for our admonition too. Anyone who persists in the evils of the wicked faces the same final judgement as the wicked (Hos 8:7). The seed of their wickedness will produce an abundant harvest of punishment.

Sinful actions sow seeds that yield evil fruit (Pr 11:18). Those who sow righteousness shall have a sure reward (Psa 126:5-6). These verses are generally used to teach the principle of sowing the gospel and reaping souls for Christ, and although that teaching can be applied, it is not what the verses mean literally. They simply express the great truth of sowing and reaping. The sowing of seeds accompanied by a spirit of brokenness will be abundantly blessed by God in the future. This encourages us to sow to righteousness through deeds of righteous obedience for a rich harvest of God's blessings (Pr 11:30-31). The righteous produce eternal life for sinners by winning them to God. Both the righteous and the wicked will reap what they sow (Eze 18:20-28). These passages clearly teach that once saved does not mean always saved as some teach. We can only be assured of a place in the kingdom if we are sowing to the Spirit at the end of our earthly life (Rev 22:11-12). As we are when we die is how we will be for all eternity. This clearly proves that there will be no chance to improve the life and character of anyone after they die (He 9:27). We need to know these scriptures in order to share them with others who do not know this (Luke 16:19-31).

There is marvellous teaching in this scripture. But first and foremost it does not teach that the rich go to hell and the poor go to heaven. Where we spend eternity is dependent entirely upon our relationship with Jesus, not whether we are rich or poor. What it does teach is that there is no intermediate state as some believe between death and our final destination in eternity called "purgatory". At death the soul and spirit of the righteous go straight to heaven while the soul and spirit of the unrighteous go straight to hell. There is no such place as "purgatory", and neither is there any further opportunity for sinners to repent. The choices we make in our earthly life determine where we will spend eternity (Pr 21:13; 22:9).

If we want God to hear our prayers when we are in need then we must also hear and respond in love to the needs of others. God has a special concern for the weak and the helpless. They are very important in His plan of redemption and He blesses those who help them. If we share God's pity for those in need we can confidently expect Him to deliver us if ever we are in trouble ourselves (Pr 19:17). There is no clearer evidence in scripture than this of how God identifies with the plight of poor people. The help we give them becomes God's own debt to us. We should consider this the greatest privilege in life: to be able to lend to God (Psa 41:1-3). Poor here means helpless and powerless, poor in health, weak and gaunt. The blessing promised to the saints here who minister to the needy is the resurrection. That is what "The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive" means (Psa 112:9). Paul quotes this Psalm to encourage Christian giving (2Cor 9:1, 15).

This scripture teaches there are four things we must do in giving: we must give willingly from the heart; we must not give grudgingly; we must not give of compulsion; we must give cheerfully. Believers who give what they can to help those in need will find that the grace of God furnishes a sufficiency for their own needs and even more in order that they may abound in good works for others (Pr 11:24-25).

God blesses those who are generous, whether it be in their finances or the giving of themselves. We are all stewards of God's gifts and we must use them for His cause and for the benefit of those in need. God promises that those who are generous will get back more than they give (Ecc 11:1 6). We must always be willing to be generous and helpful and not withhold from anyone, for nobody knows when they may need help themselves. V3 illustrates the certainty of blessing. Just as surely as nature is unfailing, so then whoever helps others in need will themselves be blessed in due course. V6 is a similar teaching to Ga 6:9 (Ga 6:9 10). While ever we keep doing good in spite of the opposition we will encounter, in due course we will reap the fruit of the harvest, and notwithstanding that we are to do good unto all men, we are to be particularly concerned with the well being of our brothers and sisters in Christ. In the Greek construction of V10 Paul is exhorting the church to not only do good when the opportunity presents itself, but to look for opportunities to do good (Mt 25:31 46). All of our giving has to be as to God our source, for whatever we do we are doing it as unto Jesus. Jesus equates our treatment of those in need with our treatment of Himself: what we do for them we do for Him. Our Christian walk is not only a spiritual walk, it must also serve the material needs of others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ (Jas 2:13 17). Here we are presented with the real test of our faith. Christians are not justified by works, but because we are justified by faith, we do the works. This proves our Christian consecration to God's service and confirms our love for God and for each other (1Jn 3:16 19). The only faith that saves is that demonstrated by works out of our love for God. This scripture is the exact counterpart of Jn 3:16. This is the acid test of Christianity by which we know whether we are following the example of God's love to others. If we are not willing to give of material things to others in need, we certainly would not lay down our lives for them (2 Cor 8:1 15).

2 Cor 8 9 contain the most extensive teaching about Christian giving in the New Testament. The principles and promises in these two chapters are a guide for believers and churches for all time. They teach that we belong to God and what we have is held as a trust for our Lord, that we must make the basic decision within our hearts to serve God and not money (Mt 6:24); that our giving is done to help those in need and to advance the Kingdom of God; that our giving should be in proportion to our income (1Cor 16:1 2). It is not important how

much we give as we learned from 2 Cor 8:12, providing we are eager to give it. We can only give in accordance with what we have. We are not forced to give what we do not have. Giving is seen as proof of our love. It should be done sacrificially and voluntarily. By giving to God we sow not only money but also faith, time and service, thus reaping greater faith and blessing in return (1Ti 6:17 19).

Here church leaders are urged to teach against the selfish use of personal wealth and to persuade wealthy members of their congregations to give liberally to God's work and lay up for themselves treasures in heaven (Mt 6:19 24; Luke 12:15; 2Cor 9:5 6; Col 3:5; He 13:5). It is not enough that wealth and material possessions should be acquired simply for our own self gratification. They must always be made available for the work of God (Luke 6:38). God's law of sowing and reaping dictates that blessings will always be returned for generosity. This teaches once more that giving and receiving go together, though we should never give in order to receive. That would be self centeredness - our giving would be profit motivated instead of being motivated by love. Receiving is not an enticement to give but the law of sowing and reaping is a principle of life already established by God and we have no say in the matter. It is an assurance that sets us free to give (Ge 8:22). There are a lot of Christians however who expect to receive the kingdom benefits without ever giving into the kingdom. But how can God bless us with all the fullness of His blessings for giving if we do not give in the first place, and how can His kingdom be extended if we do not financially support it? (1Cor 9:1 14). Paul was pointing out to the Corinthian church here that it was their duty to keep him even though he chose to keep himself (2 Th 3:7 9). It is the church's responsibility to ensure that those who minister the word live off the word (Ga 6:6).

It is the duty of all who are taught the word to help provide material support for those who teach the word. This includes all those who pastor the churches, missionaries, etc (CP 3Jn 5 8). This scripture teaches us that no workers of the word should have to seek help from those they are trying to evangelise. To have to seek help from unbelievers could hinder the gospel and expose the messengers of the gospel to charges of preaching for financial gain. Christians have a duty, and it should be seen as a privilege, to contribute to missionary needs and works. Workers of the word must not be treated like beggars, but received, sent and supported in a manner worthy of God (Mt 10:40; Luke 10:3 7; Php 4:10 19; 1Ti 5:17 18; Tit 3:13). Jesus promises that "he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." (Mt 10:41 42). This teaches us how important it is in God's economy for Christians to receive and support true messengers of the

gospel but conversely, we should not receive and support anyone who does not proclaim God's truth according to the New Testament revelation, or who do not live godly lives according to God's righteous standards. If we support them we will bring ourselves into their condemnation (2Jn 7 11).

It should be noted here that none of the scriptures studied so far concerning the giving of our finances into the work of God are referring to tithes, but to freewill offerings. The New Testament does not stress tithing but rather, as the scriptures so far studied indicate, invites Christians to give generously in response to the needs of others and as an expression of their love for God. A great many Christians believe that tithing is purely an Old Testament concept and does not translate to New Testament giving. They believe that under the new covenant the supreme law of love has been substituted for Old Testament tithing and that New Testament giving is centred entirely around stewardship - the giving of ourselves completely to the work of God, which includes our time, our finances, and our material possessions. They believe that we are to give voluntarily, spontaneously and freely, not from a sense of obligation, nor with an intent to merit God's blessings. God has given wonderfully to us and is deserving of all that we might be moved to give Him. Many of these Christians use the tithe as the minimum standard by which they measure their giving to the Lord, but they do not accept that the tithe is required by scripture. They do not agree that scriptures teach that the tithe Abraham paid to Melchizedec established a precedent for tithing that New Testament Christians must follow. Rather they believe that Abraham's tithe had special symbolic implications related to establishing Christ's eternal priesthood. They believe this is borne out by the writer of Hebrews when he contrasts Christ's eternal priesthood with the temporary Levitical priesthood (Ge 14:1 20 with He 6:17 9:17).

Whether or not we agree with that is beside the point here, suffice it to say that at the heart of all giving is the acknowledgment that God is the creator, the owner and the giver of all things, and what we give back to God is only a part of what He has given to us in the first place (Ge 1:1; Ex 19:5; 1Chr 29:11 16; Psa 24:1 2; 50:10 12; Hag 2:8; Jn 1:1 3; Jas 1:17). Everything we have belongs to the Lord. No one has anything that they had not first received from God (De 8:7 18; Job 1:21; Jn 3:27; 1Cor 4:7; 2Pe 1:3). (Concerning Job 1:21 we must remember that Job did not have a complete revelation of God when he said "... and the Lord hath taken away." Job did not know that it was not God but the devil afflicting him. He knew God gave him all he had and so he believed it was God also who took it away. But we know better - we have the book of Job to teach us yet Job's misconception of God has been perpetuated in Christendom ever since. Let us not perpetuate it any further.) To sum up here, our stewardship is a valid test of our relationship with God (Mt 25:14 30). This parable of the

talents warns us that our place and our service in heaven will depend on the faithfulness of our lives and stewardship here on earth. A talent represents our abilities, time, resources and opportunities to serve God while on earth. These things are considered by God as a trust that we are to administer on His behalf in the wisest possible way. We will all have to give an account of our stewardship to the Lord in due course and every work we do in the meantime will be brought into judgement (Ecc 12:13-14; Mt 5:20; Luke 16:1-2; Ro 14:12; 1 Cor 4:1-2). Christian giving should always be characterised by what Paul says in 2 Cor 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." See also comments on Mt 23:23, 2Cor 8:1-7, 9:1-5, 9:6, He 7:1-10.

Ga 6:10 What is Paul impressing upon New Testament Christians here?

While Paul is stressing here the importance of Christians extending kindnesses to all who need help whenever the opportunity presents itself, Christians are to be especially responsive to the needs of other Christians (Ro 12:10-13; Jas 2:14-16; 1Jn 3:16-18, 4:7-21). (Also Ro 12:10-13; Jas 2:14-16; 1Jn 3:16-18 and 4:7-21)

Ga 6:11 What does Paul mean by what he says here?

This is one of the most hotly debated verses in Christendom. Many who claim there is no bodily healing in the atonement use this verse as one of their proof texts that Paul himself was sick throughout his ministry. They argue that Paul admits here to having to write in large (alphabetical) letters because he suffered from a chronic eye disease which grossly disfigured him and prevented him from seeing properly. They claim that this was Paul's "infirmity of the flesh" he referred to in Ga 4:13-16 - the result of his "thorn in the flesh" in 2Cor 12:7 - but this is not correct as scriptures clearly prove (2 Cor 12:1-10 with Ga 4:13-16). We see here that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demon - the messenger of Satan - sent to buffet him; to cause extreme hardships to befall him (2 Cor 11:23-27). Paul's infirmity of the flesh in Ga 4:13-16 was his repulsive appearance after his near-death stoning when he and Barnabas first took the gospel to Galatia on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 and 14 (Ac 13:1-3; 14:1-20).

Paul's reference to "how large a letter" he had written to the Galatians in Ga 6:11 simply refers to the epistle itself, not to the size of the alphabetical letters he used in the subject matter of the epistle.

Ga 6:14 What exactly is the meaning of this?

This means simply that like Paul, nothing should be as important to believers as the cross of Christ. Because of the cross the world should be dead to them and they to the world. The world should have no more appeal to them or influence over them. The only important thing is that they become new creations in Christ (Ro 6:3-10; 2Cor 5:17; Ga 2:20; Php 3:3, 7-8, 20-21). (Also Luke 15:14-15, Jn 15:18-25; Jas 4:1-4; 2 Pe 3:1-7; 1 Jn 2:15-17)

Ga 6:17 What are the "marks of the Lord Jesus" Paul bore in his body?

The marks of the Lord Jesus Paul bore in his body were all the things he suffered for the gospel sake. Five times he received thirty-nine lashes, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned and left for dead, 3 time he was shipwrecked (2 Cor. 11:23-27; 2Ti 3:10-11).

The Pauline Imprisonment Letters Acts 21:17 to 28:31



It was an amazing series of events that brought Paul to Rome, the great capital city of the empire. One archaeological source suggests that the population of the imperial city in the first century was in excess of four million people, about three times the size of a large, modern city (Unger 1962, 316).

When Paul wrote to the saints in Rome from Corinth (in Greece) during the course of his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 20:2; Romans 16:23), he had expressed an intense longing to visit these Christians (Romans 1:10-11; 15:22ff). What an evangelistic opportunity this could be! Little did he realize exactly how, in the providential scheme of things, his goal would be fulfilled.

The prison letters or epistles—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—are so named because they were written by the apostle Paul during his incarceration in Rome. The exact date of Paul's imprisonment, as well as the exact dates he wrote each of the prison epistles, is unknown, but the two-year period he spent under house arrest in Rome has been narrowed down to the

years AD 60-62. Paul's imprisonment in Rome is verified by the Book of Acts, where we find references to his being guarded by soldiers (Acts 28:16), being permitted to receive visitors (Acts 28:30) and having opportunities to share the gospel (Acts 28:31). His other two-year imprisonment, in Caesarea, afforded him no such luxuries. So it is generally accepted that Paul's Roman incarceration produced three great letters to the churches of Ephesus, Colosse, and Philippi, as well as a personal letter to his friend Philemon.

One of the more amazing circumstances reflected in the Book of Acts, the fifth book of the New Testament is the manner in which Paul endeared himself to a wide variety of Roman officials. Almost without exception, these dignitaries came to respect God's ambassador to the Gentiles. One really is not surprised, therefore, at the kindly treatment Paul received in the imperial city. Rather than being housed as a common criminal, the apostle was permitted to live in his own rented dwelling, though bound with a chain, and in the company of a guard (28:16, 30; cf. Ephesians 6:20).

The latter portion of Acts 28 summarizes two meetings that Paul had with Rome's leading Jews. And while some of them stubbornly disbelieved his message, others were persuaded by the things he proclaimed (v. 24). This hints of the commencement of a fruitful ministry in the city. Then, abruptly, the narrative ends: "And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him" (vv. 30-31).

Three of the prison letters, also called the imprisonment or captivity letters, were bound for three of the churches he founded in Macedonia on his second missionary journey (Acts 20:1-3). Always concerned for the souls of those he continually prayed for in these churches, his letters reflect his pastor's heart and his love and concern for those he thought of as his spiritual children. Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colosse which endangered the existence of the church. In his letter, Paul dealt with key areas of theology, including the deity of Christ (Colossians 1:15-20, 2:2-10), the error of adding circumcision and other Jewish rituals to salvation by faith (Colossians 2:11-23), and the conduct of God's people (chapter 3). The letter to the church at Ephesus also reflects Paul's concerns for the beloved, especially that they would understand the great doctrines of the faith (chapters 1-3) and the practical outworkings of that doctrine in Christian behavior (chapters 4-6). The epistle to the Philippians is Paul's most joyful letter and references to his joy abound within its pages (Philippians 1:4, 18, 25-26, 2:2, 28, 3:1, 4:1, 4, 10). He encourages the Philippian believers to rejoice in spite of suffering and anxiety, rejoice in service, and continue to look to Christ as the object of their faith and

hope.

The fourth prison letter was written to Paul's "friend and fellow labourer," Philemon (Philemon 1:1) as a plea for forgiveness. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, had run away from Philemon's service to Rome, where he met the aging apostle and became a convert to Christ through him. Paul asks Philemon to receive him as a brother in Christ who is now "profitable" to both of them (Philemon 1:11). The theme of the Book of Philemon is forgiveness and the power of the gospel of Christ to undermine the evils of slavery by changing the hearts of both masters and slaves so that spiritual equality is achieved.

While the prison epistles reflect Paul's earthly position as a prisoner of Rome, he makes it clear that his captivity was first and foremost to Christ (Philemon 1:9; Ephesians 3:1; Colossians 4:18; Philippians 1:12-14). Paul's time in prison was for the purpose of the spreading of the gospel in the Gentile capital of Rome. The Lord Himself told Paul to "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11). Paul's time in captivity was no less profitable to us today than it was to the first-century churches he loved so well.

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Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Background

The necessity for writing Philemon and sending a letter back to Asia afforded the opportunity to send others also. Ephesians, as a general encyclical to be distributed through the Ephesian Church, and Colossians, a direct communication to the church at Colosse, were composed at this time, probably in A.D. 60-61. The messenger was Tychicus, whom Onesimus accompanied (Eph.6:21; Col.4:7-9). With Apostle Paul at the time of writing were Aristarcus, who had been one of the delegates to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4), Epaphras, an Asian, Luke "the beloved physician," and Demas. Mark had rejoined Paul at this time and was evidently contemplating a journey to Asia (Col. 4:10), for Paul commended him to Colosse. Jesus Justus, a Jewish colleague, is otherwise unknown. The very fact that these men are mentioned both in Colossians and in Philemon indicates that the epistles were written about the same time.

Ephesians was written after many churches had been founded and after the apostle Paul had opportunity to contemplate the meaning of the new organisation that had come into being. It is the one writing in the New Testament in which the word “church” means the church universal rather than the local group. It was intended to inform the Gentiles of their new calling, and it disclosed the mystery of the body of Christ in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, gay or straight.

“Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.”

- Ephesians 1:3 –

All the goodness of the past, the present and even the future, Christ bestows on His people. In the mysterious ages of the past the Lord Jesus was His Father’s first elect, and in His election He gave us an interest, for we were chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world. He had from eternity yje prerogatives of Sonship, as His Father’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and He has, in the riches of His grace, by adoption and regeneration, elevated us to sonship also, so that to us He has given “power to become the sons of God.” The eternal covenant, based on suretiship and confirmed by oath, is ours, for our strong consolation and security. In the everlasting settlements of predestinating wisdom and omnipotent decree, the eye of the Lord Jesus was ever fixed on us; and we may rest assured that in the whole role of destiny there is not a line which militates against the interests of His redeemed. The great betrothal of the Prince of Glory is ours, for it is to us that He is affianced, as the sacred nuptials shall ere long declare to an assembled universe. The marvelous incarnation of the God of heaven, with all the amazing condescension and humiliation which attended it, is ours. The bloody sweat, the scourge, the cross, are ours forever. Whatever blissful consequences flow from perfect obedience, accomplished atonement, resurrection, ascension, or intercession, all are ours by His own gift. On His breastplate he is now bearing our names; and in His authoritative pleadings at the throne He remembers our persons and pleads our cause. His dominion over principalities and powers, and His absolute majesty in heaven, He employs for the benefit of them who trust in Him. His high estate is as much at our service as was His condition of abasement. He who gave Himself for us in the depths of woe and death, doth not withdraw the grant now that He is enthroned in the highest heavens.

Date and author

This magnificent letter was evidently addressed to the church in Ephesus (Acts 19), but intended also as a circular letter to neighbouring churches. The omission of the phrase “in Ephesus” (1:1) in two of the oldest manuscripts suggest that

earlier copyists shied away from localising the letter when it was intended for reading in other churches as well in the vicinity. The apostle Paul had spent three years in the Ephesian metropolis (Acts 19:8-41). He wrote this letter, the first of his so-called prison letters or epistles, about A.D. 61 or 62 as already stated from the prison in Rome, and sent it to Asia together with Colossians and Philemon. There are significant words in this letter. Words stressing the truth of the believers' union with Christ in death, resurrection, ascension and present position. The fact of the believer's position "in Christ" tolerates the entire thought of the letter.

Grace

The word shows that the letter is an exposition of "the gospel of God's grace" (cf. Acts 20:24)

Spiritual (or Spirit) defines both the sphere of truth dealt with in the epistle and the realm of life in which believers are living.

Body is a metaphor describing our positional union with Christ.

Live

Refers to our behaviour within the Body of Christ, how we act in union with Him, the Head. This term is the heart of the practical appeal of the letter.

Heavenly realms

It sets forth the exalted sphere of the believer's position in Christ and the realm of his walk and warfare.

Mystery

The word does not denote something inscrutable, but a hidden truth held in secret till the announced time for its revelation in the divine plan.

Content

Chapters 1 - 3	Our position in Christ (What we are before God).
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2: 19-3:21	The believer as God's building
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6: 10-24

A worthy walk
A continual conflict

Salvation in Panorama
Work of the Triune God

Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Past		
Chose us in the Son	Purchased us with His blood	Persuades us to believe the gospel
Present		
Places us as sons	Reveals the Father's purpose and will	Seals us as God's own
Future		
Will fully accept us in Christ	Will inherit us as His own	Will claim us in final possession

Commentary on Ephesians

Ephesians 1: 1-23

Divine election

This is the sovereign act of God in grace by which from eternity certain are chosen from the human race for Himself (John 15:19; Ephesians 4:4). Election pertains only to God's people, not to the lost. Men are not elected to perdition. Christ is the Chosen of God par excellence (Isaiah 42: 1-7. God the Father chose us in eternity past in Him. All elect are selected to a holy life of separation to the Chooser (John 17:16; Ephesians 1:4), or individual (1 Peter 1:2), being based on divine decree and foreknowledge.

Foreordination

Foreordination is that exercise of the divine will by which that which has been determined by God from eternity past is brought to pass by Him in time. It is our guarantee that what He has predetermined for us shall not be nullified.

Foreordination and free will

Foreordination concerns only God's people. So far as the human race is concerned, every man not only may accept Christ as Saviour but is urged and invited to do so. The ground of this invitation is the work of the incarnate Son, which made the human race savable. (Hebrews 2:9: John 3:16). Free will concerns the man outside of Christ. Once he accepts the gospel and is "in Christ" his viewpoints changes, as God from His side shows him why the believer is accepted.

Divine foreordination and human free will are humanly irreconcilable, but like two parallel lines that meet infinity, they have their solution in God. Only when the sinner exercises personal faith in Christ and enters the portals of salvation does he discover emblazoned on the inside of the doorway, "Chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4, KJV).

1: 1-6

Chosen in Christ by the Father

The apostle Paul identified himself as the writer of the letter (or epistle). His being an "apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will" indicates that his apostleship did not come from a human source or through any human agency. He was an apostle on the basis of God's gracious favour, his commission as one sent forth being to advance the cause of Christ. (1:1)

Believers are "holy ones," for they have a pure standing before God on the basis of their faith in Christ and the cleansing from sin that his sacrificial death made possible. The "holy ones" are either called "faithful ones in Christ Jesus" or "believers in Christ Jesus," for the Greek word *pistós* can designate either an individual who is faithful or one who believes. If the meaning is "faithful ones in Christ Jesus," this would indicate that they are such by reason of their being at one with God's Son. As believers, they are united to him as members of his body. (1:1; see the introductory comments about the words "in Ephesus.")

"Favour," unmerited or unearned kindness, or grace would include all the help and guidance that come from the Father and his Son. The peace of which God and Christ are the source denotes an inner tranquillity. It is the sense of well-being and security that believers enjoy because of knowing that, as beloved children of God and brothers of Christ, they would be sustained and strengthened in times of trial and distress. (1:2)

In the Greek text, no verb follows the word meaning "blessed" or "praised," and many translations have added "be" after "blessed." "The God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ” is the one to be praised. “In Christ,” he has blessed believers “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” By reason of their coming to be united to Christ as members of his body, believers experience no lack in the blessings they have been granted. These blessings include the guidance and aid they receive as God’s beloved children. Being in the “heavenly places,” the blessings relate to the heavenly estate into which they have been brought because of having been constituted children of God with a heavenly inheritance in prospect. Moreover, Jesus Christ is in heaven and, from the standpoint of their union with him, believers can also be spoken of as receiving “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” (1:3)

“Before the founding of the world,” the heavenly Father chose believers “in” his Son. The expression “before the founding of the world” may be understood to mean “from the beginning” or “from of old.” The quotation from Psalm 78:2 (77:2, LXX) in Matthew 13:35 supports this significance. Greek manuscripts either read “from [the] founding” or “from [the] founding of [the] world” in the quotation from Psalm 78:2 (77:2, LXX). In the Septuagint, the passage from the book of Psalms reads, “from [the] beginning.” (1:4)

God’s choosing “in Christ” finds a parallel in the choosing of the nation of Israel. Even before a single member of the nation came into existence, God, “in Abraham,” chose the nation to be his people as the one through whom his Son would come in the flesh. Likewise, the real Israel (God’s approved people) is considered as existing in Christ before any member thereof came into a relationship of oneness with him. This indicates that the choosing is totally independent of any merit on the part of the chosen ones, the choosing being solely an expression of God’s gracious favour. His will has always been for humans to be at one with his Son as part of his beloved family, and the purpose of his choosing is that those who come to be his children lead “holy” or pure and “blameless” lives “before him” or in his sight. (1:4)

“In love” could be understood to mean that those chosen were to live in love, their holiness or purity and blamelessness finding full expression in the love that would be evident in all their conduct. A number of translations are explicit in linking love to believers. (1:4) “Before the foundation of the world he chose us in Christ to be his people, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love.” (REB) “Before the world was created, God had Christ choose us to live with him and to be his holy and innocent and loving people.” (CEV)

There is a possibility, however, that the words “in love” apply to God, indicating that he is the one who, in his love, predetermined that believers would be adopted as his sons or children. (1:4, 5) Numerous translations convey this

significance. “In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ.” (NAB) “He planned, in his purpose of love, that we should be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ.” (J. B. Phillips) “Because of his love, God had already decided to make us his own children through Jesus Christ.” (NCV)

It is “through Jesus Christ” that believers come to be sons or children of God, as his sacrificial death provided the basis for their being forgiven of sins and reconciled to his Father as approved members of his family. God’s granting sonship to them is “according to the good pleasure [*eudokía*] of his will.” This indicates that God wants to bring humans into his family of approved children, and it pleases him. (1:5; see the Notes section on verses 5 and 9 regarding *eudokía*.)

When, in his good pleasure, God willed to grant sonship to believers, he revealed the “glory,” splendour, or magnificence of his gracious favor or unmerited kindness. Nothing about the manner in which believers are adopted as sons is attributable to personal merit. God is the one who took the initiative in making sonship possible “in his beloved one,” or by what he effected through his unique Son Jesus Christ. The Father’s adopting believers as his children is the exclusive expression of his gracious favour. As a consequence of having been graciously granted the status of sons or children, believers praise the “glory” of the incomparable favour that has been extended to them. (1:6; see the Notes section.)

6 “Accepted in the Beloved”

What a privilege! It includes our *justification* before God, but the term “acceptance” in the Greek means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of *divine complacency*, nay, even of *divine delight*. How marvellous that we, worms, mortals, sinners, should be the objects of divine love! But it is only “*in the beloved*.” Some Christians seem to be accepted in their own experience, at least, that is their apprehension. When their spirit is lively, and their hopes bright, they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! But when their souls cleave to the dust, they are the victims of the fear that they are no longer accepted. If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father’s sight, but that they stand accepted in One who never alters, in One who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, how much happier they would be, and how much more they would honour the Saviour! Rejoice then, believer, in this: thou art accepted “in the beloved.” Thou lookest within, and thou sayest,

“There is nothing acceptable *here!*” But look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable *there*. Thy sins trouble thee; but God has cast thy sins behind his back, and thou art accepted in the Righteous One. Thou hast to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, but thou art already accepted in him who has overcome the powers of evil. The devil tempts thee; be of good cheer, he cannot destroy thee, for thou art accepted in him who has broken Satan’s head. Know by full assurance thy glorious standing. Even glorified souls are not more accepted than thou art. They are only accepted in heaven “in the beloved,” and thou art even now accepted in Christ after the same manner.

1: 7-12

Redeemed by the Son

It is because of what God did through his Son that he brings believers into his family of approved children. “In Christ” (or by what Christ accomplished when laying down his life), believers are redeemed, or set free from sin, by his blood. According to God’s purpose, his Son’s blood is the precious price that secured the release of those who, in faith, accepted this payment for them to have their trespasses forgiven. Their being forgiven is “according to the riches of [God’s] favour.” It is an incomparably generous expression of his freely granted kindness. (1:7)

8-10 Enlightened by his grace

The phrase about “abounding” (“which he [caused] to abound in us”) relates to God’s lavish or bountiful bestowal of his gracious favor to believers, which favor embraces everything that has made it possible for them to be his sons and to share in the privileges and blessings that members of his approved family enjoy. It is not possible to be certain, however, about whether the words “wisdom” (*sophía*) and “insight” (*phrónesis*) relate to the action of God in causing his gracious favour to abound. (1:8)

The thought could be that God, “in all [his] wisdom and insight,” lavished his gracious favour on believers. A number of translations take the words about wisdom and insight as introducing verse 9. “In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will.” (NAB) “With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will.” (NRSV) Another possibility is that God generously bestowed his favor on believers along with wisdom and insight. The *Revised English Bible* represents God, “in the richness of his grace,” as lavishing on believers “all wisdom and insight.” (1:8; see the Notes section.)

If the reference is to the wisdom and insight that God has imparted to believers, their coming to have this wisdom and insight would make it possible for them to know or understand the “mystery” of his will. It is called a mystery because, in past ages, God’s will respecting the deliverance of humans from sin had been concealed and did not become fully known until after his Son came to the earth. “According to,” or in keeping with “his” (not included in all manuscripts), “good pleasure” (*eudokía*) or his kindly resolve to benefit humans, which resolve “he purposed in him [or, in himself],” God made the mystery known. To benefit from the good that God had purposed for them, humans needed to understand the divine mystery, and he took delight both in his resolve that had long remained secret and then in his making it known. (1:9)

Many translators (in verse 9) have replaced the concluding Greek pronoun for “him” with the proper noun, Christ. They thus represent God’s kindly resolve respecting humans to have been determined beforehand in or through his Son, or to have been revealed through him. “He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, according to his good pleasure which he determined beforehand in Christ.” (NJB) “He has made known to us his secret purpose, in accordance with the plan which he determined beforehand in Christ.” (REB) “He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ.” (NRSV)

If the pronoun “him” is to be understood as meaning “himself,” the thought would be that God, within himself and without any outside factors or influences, made the kindly resolve to benefit humans and found delight in doing so. (1:9)

God purposed to have a “stewardship [at] the fullness of the times,” to bring “all things in heaven and on earth” into union with Christ as head. This “stewardship” is God’s own arrangement for producing oneness with his Son and began functioning after his Son came to the earth at the “fullness of the times” or when the time proved to be just right to put into effect the predetermined arrangement for unifying everything in heaven and on earth. Sin had brought about an alienation between humans on earth and the holy ones who are in heaven. Only through an arrangement that could bring about forgiveness of and liberation from sin could harmony be restored. (1:10)

The significance of what God has done “in Christ” depends on the meaning of the Greek word *kleróo*. This term can either signify “to appoint by lot” or “to obtain by lot” (as an inheritance). In case the meaning is to “appoint by lot,” this could denote that God has chosen believers in Christ. Already in verse 4 the choosing in God’s Son is mentioned, and so it does not appear that “to appoint by lot” would be the preferable meaning. (1:11; see the Notes section.)

It is more likely that, in this context, “to obtain by lot” or “to inherit” conveys the intended sense. Jewish believers are assured of obtaining their heavenly inheritance on account of being “in” Christ or at one with him. God had predetermined that they would be heirs. He is the one who “according to his purpose” does everything “according to the counsel of his will.” God always acts in keeping with what he decides to be his will. (1:11)

The purpose for the divine predetermination respecting the Jews who would respond in faith is that they would serve to praise his glory. This glory would particularly relate to God’s action in bringing about a liberation from sin through his Son and reconciling Jewish believers to himself. Based on the sacred writings that God had committed to them as a people and which pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah or Christ, the Jews were the first to hope in Christ, and Jews were the first ones to put faith in him, were forgiven of their sins, and came to be reconciled to God as his beloved children. Having become part of God’s family of sons or children, they were also heirs, with a precious heavenly inheritance in prospect. (1:12)

The non-Jewish believers to whom the letter is addressed became sharers in the same benefits and blessings. When they heard “the word of truth, the evangel of [their (literally, ‘your,’ in the text of many Greek manuscripts)] salvation,” they recognized the message as revealing the truth about how they could be saved or freed from the condemnation of sin. Accordingly, they put faith in Christ, accepting the evangel or good news about the provision for forgiveness of their sins on the basis of his sacrificial death. Then, “in” Christ, or by reason of their union with him, they were sealed with the promised holy spirit. Through the Hebrew prophets, God had promised to impart his spirit to those who would be forgiven of their sins, and the working of his spirit within them constituted the proof that they were his approved ones. (1:13; compare Jeremiah 31:34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Joel 2:28, 29[3:1, 2]; Acts 2:33, 38, 39.)

1: 13-14

Sealed by the Spirit

13b-14 The Spirit seals the believer

For believers, the spirit is the deposit, first instalment, or pledge that guarantees their inheritance. In prospect is their full redemption, which will mean the attainment of the sinless state as God’s possession, “for the praise of his glory.” The glory to be praised likely is the splendour or magnificence God has revealed in the outworking of his marvellous purpose for believers. (1:14)

1: 15-23

Prayer for realisation of the believer's position in Christ

Probably to link the words that follow with the previous expression about the future redemption, the apostle introduced the thought about his praying with the Greek expression meaning “therefore.” Because of the marvellous redemption believers would attain, Paul, upon hearing about the faith of believers in the Lord Jesus and their “love for all the holy ones,” did not cease giving thanks to God for them whenever he remembered them in his prayers. Their faith in Jesus would have included recognizing him as their Lord and God’s unique Son and acknowledging what he accomplished by laying down his life sacrificially. Love for the “holy ones” or for fellow believers would have been expressed in efforts to provide assistance in times of need. (1:15, 16; compare 1 John 3:14-18; 4:11, 12, 20, 21; see the Notes section regarding verse 15.)

The apostle petitioned the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,” to give believers a “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” When identifying the Father as the God of our Lord Jesus, Paul could base this on Jesus’ own teaching. After his resurrection and prior to his ascension to heaven, Jesus had told Mary Magdalene to inform his “brothers” or disciples, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.” (John 20:17) As the “Father of glory,” God is the one to whom all splendor or magnificence belongs. He is the “all-glorious Father.” (REB) The purpose for his granting a “spirit of wisdom” (or the capacity for comprehension) and of “revelation” (the disclosure of what may previously have been hidden) would lead to their truly knowing him, fully comprehending their relationship to him as beloved children. (1:17)

Through the divinely granted wisdom and revelation, believers would be able to appreciate the aspects that the apostle next mentioned. The “eyes of [their (literally, ‘your,’ according to numerous manuscripts)] hearts” would be illuminated, making it possible for them to “know” or understand the hope to which they had been called. This suggests that they would come to see the greatness of the hope of coming to be united with Christ in the sinless state and enjoying all the blessings associated with their approved standing as God’s children. The illumination of the “eyes of [their] hearts” would refer to the discernment they would come to have in their inmost selves. (1:18; see the Notes section.)

Paul also wanted believers to be enlightened within themselves respecting the “riches of the glory of his inheritance [the inheritance God has promised] among the holy ones.” All the “holy ones” or all of God’s people share in this

inheritance. The inheritance would include the privileges and blessings they would come to have by reason of being God's children. This inheritance is unparalleled in glory, splendour, or magnificence. As a bountiful inheritance, the "glory" attached to it is described in terms of "riches." (1:18)

The apostle next focused on divine power. He desired that believers would be illuminated regarding the "exceeding greatness" of God's power at work in believers. That power corresponded to the might of God's strength, which incomprehensibly great power was at work in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at God's right hand in the "heavenly places." (1:19, 20)

In his highly exalted state at his Father's right hand, Jesus is "above all dominion and authority and power and lordship, and [above] every name named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." His Father, in the exercise of his sovereign power in connection with the resurrection of Christ, granted him all authority in heaven and on earth, and no one else, at any time in the future, will ever occupy such an exalted position. As "King of kings and Lord of lords," Jesus Christ has a name of unparalleled greatness. (1:21; Revelation 19:16)

The Father placed "all things under his feet," subjecting everything to him, and gave him [as] head over all things to the congregation." Accordingly, in relation to all creation and the congregation or community of believers, Christ is the head. Everything and everyone else is subject to him. (1:22)

The congregation is Christ's body, with the individual members being at one with him as their head. This reference to Christ's body is followed by the words, "the fullness of the one who fills all things in all." The measure of obscurity reflected in these words makes it difficult to establish the meaning. Either Christ or God could be understood as the one who fills all things in all, with everything (the "fullness") that is in union with him being pervaded by his influence and sustained by his power. In view of the emphasis on his exaltation, it appears more likely that the reference would be to Christ. (1:23)

The phrase about "the fullness" could also be read to mean that the congregation is Christ's fullness and that it completes him as his body, the members of which he brings into union with himself. This significance would seem to be less likely, as it is difficult to see how a discussion of Christ's exalted state would then focus on the congregation as being contributory to him. (1:23; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

In the Greek text, the words of verses 3 through 14 constitute just one sentence. This makes it difficult to determine for a certainty whether a particular phrase relates to the words that follow or precede it.

Especially verses 4 and 5 have been used in the development of the doctrine of predestination, which doctrine represents everything as having been divinely determined beforehand, including the evil of those who persistently remain in unbelief. It should be noted, however, that these verses are but part of a very long sentence, and this in itself should serve as a restraint in using them to support a doctrinal formulation that greatly expands on the actual words contained in the Scriptures. The sacred writings emphasize God's love for the world of mankind, and the greatness of this love transcends anything we humans can even imagine. In expression of his love, God sent his Son to the earth to lay down his life. By thus taking the initiative in reaching out to sinful humans, God made it possible for them to turn to him, be forgiven of their sins, and be reconciled to him as his beloved children. His desire is for no member of the human family to perish but for all to attain to repentance and to be reconciled to him, gaining the status of approved children in accord with his predetermined gracious purpose. (John 1:10-12; 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9.) It is inconceivable that God would act contrary to his predetermined purpose and his desire for all to attain to repentance by predestining to eternal condemnation any member of the human family for whom Christ died.

In verses 5 and 9, the Greek term *eudokía* can refer to the state of being favourably disposed and can include the thought of finding delight or satisfaction.

In verse 6, a number of later manuscripts add "his son" after "the beloved."

One objection that has been raised for viewing "wisdom" and "insight" as relating to God is that the Greek word for "insight," *phrónesis* is a faculty more commonly associated with humans. In the Septuagint, however, the term *phrónesis* is used with reference to God in connection to his creative activity (Proverbs 3:19; Jeremiah 10:12), and so there is no reason to rule out the application to God in Ephesians 1:8.

In verse 11, the form of the Greek word *kleróo* is a first person plural passive verb. If understood to mean "to obtain by lot" or "to inherit," this verb could be rendered "we have received an inheritance," and this significance is reflected in numerous modern translations. "In Christ indeed we have been given our share

in the heritage, as was decreed in his design whose purpose is everywhere at work; for it was his will.” (REB) “And it is in him that we have received our heritage, marked out beforehand as we were, under the plan of the One who guides all things as he decides by his own will.” (NJB) “In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will.” (NRSV)

For the significance “to obtain by lot,” the form of the Greek verb *kleróō* (in verse 11) could be translated “we were chosen.” “In Christ we were chosen to be God’s people, because from the very beginning God had decided this in keeping with his plan. And he is the One who makes everything agree with what he decides and wants.” (NCV) “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.” (NIV) “In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will.” (NAB)

A shorter reading of verse 15, which does not include the reference to love, is found in the oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and a number of other manuscripts.

In verse 18, the oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE), fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, and a number of other manuscripts do not include the plural form of “your” with reference to the “heart.”

The measure of uncertainty about the meaning of the concluding verse is evident from the variety of different renderings. “The church is filled with Christ, and Christ fills everything in every way.” (NCV) “The church ... is his body, the fullness of him who is filling the universe in all its parts.” (REB) “For the Church is his body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole wide universe.” (J. B. Phillips) “And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.” (NLT) *Die Gemeinde ist sein Leib: Er, der alles zur Vollendung führen wird, lebt in ihr mit seiner ganzen Fülle.* (The congregation is his body: He, who will lead everything to its completion, lives in it with all his fullness. [German, *Gute Nachricht Bibel*]) A footnote in the German *Neue Genfer Übersetzung* includes an alternate rendering that represents Christ as being completed by the congregation (just like the head needs the body). Another alternate rendering in the same translation refers to God as living in Christ with all his fullness.

Ephesians 2: 1-22

2: 1-7

The believer as a member of Christ's Body.

Addressing non-Jewish believers, Paul described the condition in which they had found themselves. They had been dead in trespasses and sins, for their defiled conduct would have led to death. From God's standpoint, they were in a state of condemnation, with the record of their having lived contrary to the prompting of their consciences exposing them as wrongdoers. (2:1, 11)

They had "walked" or lived in a manner typical of the age that characterized the "world," the Greco-Roman world of that time. Theirs had proved to be a way of life that conformed to the "ruler of the authority of the air." This ruler is doubtless the devil, with his influence seemingly being represented as coming from above the earth. There is also a possibility that the designation "ruler of the authority of the air" describes the devil as one who controls the corrupt element that the world of mankind alienated from God imbibes (or breathes in like the air). (2:2)

Either the devil himself or the evil influence emanating from him as "ruler of the authority of the air" is designated as "the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience." Persons who persist in unbelief and conduct themselves contrary to God's ways are "sons" or offspring of disobedience in that they reveal themselves to be subject to disobedience in the same manner as children are subject to their parents. The "sons of disobedience" are rebels against God, with disobedience to him governing their lives. (2:2)

Manuscripts vary in whether Paul included himself among those who previously lived contrary to God's ways ("also we") or whether he continued to direct his words to non-Jewish believers ("also you"). The basic thought, however, is the same. Among the "sons of disobedience," all believers formerly had yielded to the desires of their flesh, doing what their flesh or sinful human nature wanted. By nature, or in their fallen or sinful state, they proved to be "children of wrath" just like the rest of humankind at enmity with God. Their corrupt way of life merited his wrath. (2:3)

Nevertheless, God, the one who is "rich in mercy" (or whose mercy is abundant and bountifully bestowed), "because of the great love with which he loved us," made us alive with Christ. The surpassing greatness of divine love was manifested while believers were in a state of alienation, "dead in trespasses." Upon putting faith in Christ and what he accomplished in laying down his life

for them, they ceased to be under condemnation for their sins but came to have a newness of life as approved children of God. Having been brought into living union with Christ by allowing themselves to be drawn to God's love and responding in faith to his Son, they became sharers in Christ's righteousness (his absolute uprightness and purity). Thus it proved to be by God's gracious favor that they were saved or delivered from the condemnation that their sins merited. As sinners, they did not deserve to be rescued from their fallen state. (2:4, 5; see the Notes section.)

With his Son, God raised believers from being dead in sins and under condemnation. In this way, they became sharers in Christ's resurrection and came to have a new life as God's approved children. He seated believers with his Son in the heavenly places, exalting them as his own precious ones. This seating in the heavenly places is "in Christ Jesus," for believers are united to him as their head. Whereas believers were despised in the world that was alienated from God, their having been made one with his Son seated them in heavenly places, far above the world's great ones who contemptuously looked down upon them. (2:6)

In coming ages, their being raised to a newness of life and seated in the heavenly places would serve to show the "exceeding riches" or the superabundance of God's gracious favour in the kindness he expressed toward believers. He acted in kindness toward them "in Christ Jesus," dealing with them as dearly beloved ones by reason of their having come to be at one with his Son and sharers in his Son's uprightness and purity. (2:7)

2: 8-10

The way of salvation in the Body

8-9 Saved by grace

Through their faith in Christ, believers were saved or delivered from the condemnation of sin. Whereas they responded in faith to the divine arrangement for having their sins forgiven, they were saved by God's gracious favor. Nothing they had personally done entitled them to have Christ die for them and provide the basis for being forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God as his approved children. Everything proved to be God's gift, unearned and unmerited. (2:8)

The standing of believers as divinely approved ones, persons who did not have their sins reckoned against them, had not come about as a result of personal efforts. It was not "out of works," precluding any boasting. (2:9)

When it comes to salvation, believers have no basis for pride in personal achievement, for they became what they are on account of God's action. By him, they have been made his sons or children. "In Christ Jesus" or as persons at one with him, they have been created "for good works." These good works God prepared beforehand so that believers might "walk in them." He had predetermined the way of life that would distinguish his beloved children, with love prompting upright conduct and selfless responsiveness to the needs of others. (2:10)

2: 11-18

The Body made one by Christ's blood

In view of their dignified standing as God's children, Paul wanted the non-Jewish believers to remember their former state as Gentiles "in [the] flesh" or by natural descent. Jews who took pride in circumcision (the sign of their covenant relationship with God) disparagingly called the Gentiles "the uncircumcision." Jewish circumcision had been carried out by human hands and so contrasted with the circumcision of the heart that God performed through the operation of his spirit and which circumcision resulted in upright conduct prompted by the responsive heart or the inmost self of the individual believer. (2:11)

At the time Gentile believers were in their former state, they were without the Messiah or Christ. They knew nothing about the coming of the promised Messiah and had no hope of a future deliverance through him from their sinful state that had death in view. In relation to the community of Israel or God's people as a nation, they were aliens. Non-Jews were strangers to the "covenants of the promise," knowing nothing about the covenants nor the promise inherent in them. These covenants could include the ones God made with Abraham, with the nation of Israel in the time of Moses and, finally, with David. The covenants contained the promise about the coming Messiah who would be the seed of Abraham, a prophet like Moses, and a king in the royal line of David. (2:12; Genesis 15:1-21; 22:15-18; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14)

Non-Jews had no hope of a coming Messiah and the blessings that would come through him, including forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God as his children. They, as part of the world that was at enmity with the true God, did not know him. Having no relationship with him, they were without God. (2:12)

13-18 What we are in Christ

“In Christ Jesus,” or by having come to be at one with him, non-Jews who were once far off as strangers came to be near as God’s beloved children. This had been effected “by [literally, ‘in’] the blood of Christ.” The power inherent in his blood, which he shed sacrificially, made it possible for all who put faith in him and the surrender of his life for them to be forgiven of their sins, to be incorporated into his body, and to be acknowledged by his Father as his approved sons or children. (2:13)

Therefore, with reference to both Jews and non-Jews, Paul could say regarding Jesus, “He is our peace.” Through his death, he ended the marked separation between Jews and non-Jews, with all those putting faith in him coming to have an equal standing as children in his Father’s family. The former separation, division, or alienation was thus abolished, being replaced by the peace existing in a united family. Apart from Christ this peace is impossible. (2:14)

He made the two peoples, Jews and non-Jews, one and broke down the dividing wall that functioned as a barrier between them. This wall is called “the enmity,” for division does not produce peace but leads to disunity and hostility. “In his flesh,” or in the element of his fleshly or human body, he brought about the oneness of Jews and non-Jews, demolishing the former barrier. Christ sacrificed his physical body of flesh so that, through his death, both believing Jews and non-Jews could be united to him as head and members of his corporate body. (2:14)

The “wall” is identified as “the law of the commandments in decrees.” This literal reading of the majority of extant Greek manuscripts may be understood to mean that the law given to the Israelites contained commandments that consisted of single decrees or ordinances. It was the law, with its specific requirements (including circumcision, dietary restrictions, and distinctive grooming and clothing features) that brought about the marked separation between Jews and non-Jews. (2:15) At the temple in Jerusalem, this division existed in tangible form. A wall, with openings for passing through to courts having higher degrees of sanctity, marked the limits of the Court of the Gentiles. Large stones bore an inscription warning non-Jews not to go beyond the barrier. (See the Notes section.)

By fulfilling the law, living up to its purpose and then dying sacrificially, Jesus abolished it as a barrier between Jew and non-Jew. Thereby, “in his flesh” (or by means of the fleshly body that he sacrificed), he created a “new man” or new corporate person “in himself.” On the basis of having given up his body of flesh

in sacrifice, he created this “new man” (or “new people”) in himself upon bringing believing Jews and non-Jews into unity with himself as the one body of which he is the head. In this manner, he also “made peace,” for through his death he removed the divisive barrier existing between Jews and non-Jews. (2:15)

The “cross” (*staurós*) here represents what Christ accomplished through his sacrificial death, making possible forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with his Father. Through his death on the *staurós*, Jesus Christ reconciled both Jews and non-Jews “in one body to God.” To have an acceptable standing with his Father, Jews and non-Jews needed to put faith in him and the efficacy of his sacrificial death. In this way both peoples came to be united in “one body,” the body of which Christ is the head. The Son of God, “in himself” or through the surrender of his body in death, also removed the barrier that separated Jews from non-Jews, killing the “enmity” that had existed between them and their mutual alienation from God on account of their sinful state. (2:16; see the Notes section.)

After his baptism in the Jordan and later through the disciples whom he commissioned, Jesus came as one who could be recognized as the promised Messiah or Christ and proclaimed the glad tidings of peace “to those far off, and peace to those near.” Those “far off” are the non-Jews, as they had no relationship with the true God and were without the sacred writings that revealed his will and promises. From the standpoint of being in a covenant relationship with God and in possession of divine revelation conveyed through the prophets and recorded in the sacred writings, the Jews are designated as “those near.” Jesus carried out his activity among them, with rare exceptions interacting with non-Jews. Through the disciples, however, he declared the good news of peace to those who were far off, the non-Jews. The message of peace indicated how both Jews and non-Jews could come to be reconciled to God. Both peoples needed to put faith in him as the Son of God and accept the provision his Father made through him to be forgiven of their sins. (2:17; see the Notes section.)

Believers have had God’s spirit imparted to them and, “through” Christ, are granted approach to the Father. Based on Christ’s death for them, “both peoples,” Jews and non-Jews, gain an acceptable standing before the Father and, “through Christ,” are able to draw near to him as his dear children. It is only by recognizing Jesus Christ as the one through whom deliverance from sin has been made possible and him as Lord by his Father’s appointment that anyone can acceptably approach God. As sharers in the “one spirit,” God’s spirit, Jewish and non-Jewish believers are united as one in their access to the Father. (2:18)

2: 19-22

The believer as God's building or temple

For non-Jewish believers, their former state of alienation ended and they ceased to be “far off” from the true God. No longer were they strangers and like aliens passing through a foreign country. They were “fellow citizens of the holy ones,” having the same standing as Jewish believers, and came to belong to God's household, the family of his beloved children. (2:19)

Non-Jewish believers had come to be part of a sacred edifice. The apostles and prophets serve as the foundation of this edifice, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone. Non-Jewish believers were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. In the capacity of the foundation, the apostles and prophets had been entrusted with the message about Christ, and they were the first ones to proclaim it. Jesus Christ had personally taught the apostles, and their testimony about him provided the solid basis for putting faith in him. Likewise many Christian prophets had a direct link to Jesus' teaching. All who become part of the sacred edifice must, like building blocks, be aligned in conformity with the most important stone, Jesus Christ himself. (2:20)

It is “in” Christ, or with the individual members being at one with him, that the entire “building, bonded together, is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.” The unifying element is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the growth into a holy sanctuary is also in him as Lord. This holy sanctuary or temple is not portrayed in a static state, but in one of continual growth. An increasing number of believers continue to be built “on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” with all seeking to be conformed to the pattern of the principal stone, Jesus Christ. (2:21)

Continuing to address the non-Jewish believers, Paul added, “In whom [in the Lord Jesus Christ to whom he had just referred] you also are being built up together [with all others] into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” As persons who had been united to Christ, non-Jewish believers along with Jewish believers collectively came to be a place where God would dwell by means of his spirit. His spirit would be in their midst, guiding them and serving as the means for supplying essential aid. (2:22; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

In verse 5, the oldest Greek manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus represent believers as having been made alive “in Christ,”

enjoying a newness of life by being at one with him. The majority of manuscripts, however, indicate that believers were made alive with Christ.

The covenant promise to Abraham was also repeated to Isaac and Jacob. (Genesis 26:2-5; 28:13-15; 35:11, 12) When relating the incident of Aaron's making atonement for the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, the book of Wisdom (thought to have been written in the first century BCE) refers to his appealing on the basis of the "oaths and covenants" given to the forefathers. (Wisdom 18:21-23; compare Exodus 32:13; Numbers 16:41-50.) Therefore, the "covenants of the promise" mentioned in Ephesians 2:12 could have included the oath-bound promise God made to both Isaac and Jacob.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*War*, V, v, 2) wrote that the stone barrier had a height of three cubits (about 4.5 feet), and "upon it stood pillars, at equal distances from one another, declaring the law of purity, some in Greek, and some in Roman letters, that 'no foreigner should go within that sanctuary.'"

In 1871, Clermont-Ganneau found an almost complete warning notice inscribed on stone having a thickness of nearly 6 inches. This notice indicates that no foreigner should enter the protective barrier "around the sanctuary" and then says, "Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." A very fragmentary inscription, with similar wording, was discovered in 1935.

In itself, the Greek word *staurós*, commonly translated "cross" (in Ephesians 2:16), denotes a stake or pole, and the *staurós* which Jesus and later Simon carried was a beam. A long stake with a transverse beam would have been too heavy for one man to carry or to drag. The Latin term *crux*, from which the English word "cross" is derived, can designate a tree or a wooden instrument on which victims were either hanged or impaled.

In the allegorical Epistle of Barnabas (thought to date from the early second century and so from a time when the Romans continued to practice crucifixion), the *staurós* is linked to the letter tau (T). Moreover, very limited archaeological evidence does indicate that the Romans did make use of upright poles with a transverse beam.

Ancient abbreviated forms of the noun *staurós* and the verb *stauróo* (a number of preserved occurrences in P66 [second century] and P75 [though not consistently used in this late second-century or early third-century manuscript]) combine the letters tau (T) and rho (R) in a manner that is visually suggestive of a cross. This tau-rho ligature also appears in pre-Christian and non-Christian texts as an abbreviation for a number of terms, including the word *trópos* (meaning "way,"

“manner,” or “habit”). Possibly Christian copyists adopted this ligature when abbreviating *staurós* because of associating the implement on which Jesus died with the letter tau (T). The existence of other abbreviated forms for the noun *staurós* and the verb *stauróo* in ancient biblical manuscripts which do not use the tau-rho ligature would seem to support the conjecture that early copyists chose this ligature for its visual effect.

The Greek word rendered “crucify” (*stauróo*) can denote hanging, binding, or nailing a victim on or to a stake, a tree, or an implement with a transverse beam. Doubtless the availability of wood and the number of individuals who were executed determined the shape of the implement used for crucifixion. In a Latin work attributed to Vulcatius Gallicanus, Emperor Avidius Cassius had criminals tied from the top to the bottom of a 180-foot high wooden stake. The manner in which these persons were attached to this stake is referred to as crucifixion (*in crucem sustulit*, according to the Latin text). Roman soldiers do not appear to have followed any specific method when carrying out crucifixions. According to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (*War*, V, xi, 1), the soldiers, out of wrath and hatred for the Jews, nailed those they caught, one in one way, and another in another way.

It is commonly believed that upright stakes were already at Golgotha or that the beams that had been carried to the site were attached to three adjacent trees (or possibly even the same tree) there. The minority view (expressed, for example, in Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*) is that Jesus was nailed in an upright position to the pole that Simon had carried and that it was not used as a transverse beam.

In verse 17, many later manuscripts do not include the word “peace” with reference to “those near.” Likely considering the repetition of “peace” to be redundant, copyists did not include it.

Fourth-century Codex Vaticanus, unlike the majority of manuscripts, says, in verse 22, “dwelling place of Christ” (not “God”).

Ephesians 3: 1-21

3:1-12

The formation of the building (temple) revealed

1-6 The mystery and its meaning

The introductory words, “thanks to this” or “for this reason,” appear to relate to what non-Jewish believers had come to enjoy on account of what Christ Jesus had done for them. The apostle’s referring to himself in a solemn manner as “I, Paul,” may have been intended to remind those to whom he wrote about everything that had become associated with his name as an apostle, including his labors, the truth of the message he proclaimed, and his suffering for the sake of Christ. (3:1; see the Notes section.)

After referring to himself as “the prisoner of Christ,” he added, “for you of the [non-Jewish] nations.” He was then imprisoned, presumably in Rome, enduring for Christ, the one to whom he belonged. This imprisonment had resulted from his ministering to the Gentiles. (3:1)

At the temple in Jerusalem, Jews from the Roman province of Asia falsely accused Paul and incited mob action against him. If it had not been for the intervention of Roman soldiers, he would have been killed. Subsequently, the Roman commander (the chiliarch) permitted Paul to make his defense. When the apostle mentioned his commission to people of the nations, his Jewish listeners became enraged, declaring him to be deserving of death. Thereafter, under Roman authority, he was confined first in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea, and finally in Rome, where he waited for the time when Caesar would hear his appeal as a Roman citizen. (Acts 21:27-40; 22:21, 22; 23:12-35; 24:27; 25:8-15; 26:30-32; 27:1; 28:17-20, 30, 31)

In the Greek text, verse 1 is not a complete sentence, and the words from verse 2 through verse 13 do not finish the thought but are parenthetical. Not until verse 14 is the thought (begun in verse 1) completed, indicating that Paul prayed for the believing Gentiles. A number of modern translations make this explicit. “With this in mind I pray for you, I, Paul, who for the sake of you Gentiles am now the prisoner of Christ Jesus.” (REB) *Weil ich, Paulus, euch Nichtjuden diese rettende Botschaft verkündete, bin ich nun im Gefängnis. Als Gefangener Jesu Christi bete ich für euch.* (Because I, Paul, declared this saving message to you non-Jews, I am now in prison. As a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I pray for you.) (German, *Hoffnung für alle*)

The apostle's words, "if indeed you have heard," may be understood to mean "surely you have heard." Those to whom he directed his letter must have come to know about the "stewardship" of God's gracious favor that had been given to him for them. This stewardship referred to his service as an apostle to the nations, making known the glad tidings about Jesus Christ and how individuals could become recipients of God's gracious favour or kindness. Divine unmerited kindness made it possible for people of the nations who put their faith in Christ to be forgiven of their sins and to be reconciled to his Father as beloved children. So, as the apostle expressed it, the stewardship of God's gracious favor was for the benefit of those to whom he had written. (3:2; see the Notes section.)

Previously in his letter, Paul, in a few words, had written about the divine "mystery" (1:8-14; 2:11-22) as it related to Jews and non-Jews. "According to" or by revelation, Paul had come to know this long-hidden divine secret. (3:3)

In his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ while on his way to Damascus in the role of a persecutor of believers, Paul heard the basic message of the mystery. Jesus Christ then told him that his commission to people of the nations would be "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:15-18, NRSV)

Upon reading what Paul had written in this particular letter (or hearing it read to them), those whom he addressed would perceive his comprehension of the "mystery of Christ." It is the "mystery of Christ," for he is the one through whom his Father disclosed the previously hidden secret and who also fulfilled his Father's will respecting it. (3:4)

In "other generations," this mystery "was not made known to the sons of men" (humankind). To the "holy apostles and prophets" of the first century CE, however, it had been revealed. Possibly to distinguish the true apostles and prophets from false apostles and prophets, Paul called them "holy," indicating that they were holy or pure as divinely approved persons. The disclosure regarding this mystery came to the holy apostles and prophets "in spirit" or through the operation of God's holy spirit upon them. (3:5)

The revealed divine secret is that, with believing Jews, believers from the non-Jewish nations would come to be fellow heirs, members of the same body, and "joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the evangel." "In Christ Jesus" or through their union with him, believing Jews and non-Jews become fellow heirs as God's children, form one corporate body with Christ as head, and share in all the benefits and blessings included in the divine promise. With

reference to the mystery, the promise made to the Israelites and their forefathers pointed to the coming of the Messiah and the resultant benefits and blessings. “Through the evangel” may be understood to mean that what the non-Jews would come to enjoy is revealed in the evangel or good news about Jesus Christ or that, by their response to this good news, non-Jews would come to be fellow sharers with Jewish believers. (3:6)

7-12 The mystery and Paul’s ministry

In connection with the evangel, Paul became a servant, for he was divinely commissioned as an apostle to proclaim the glad tidings about Christ Jesus to people of the nations. It was not on account of any personal merit that Paul was entrusted with this ministry nor did he carry it out in his own strength. God, in expression of his gracious favour, granted it to him as a free gift “according to the working of his power.” Divinely empowered through the operation of God’s spirit, Paul faithfully discharged the sacred trust that had been committed to him. (3:7; compare 1 Corinthians 15:10.)

In view of his former course as an insolent persecutor of believers, the apostle referred to himself as the least of all of God’s holy ones (his approved people) to have been granted this gracious favour, being commissioned to proclaim the glad tidings of the “unfathomable riches of Christ” to peoples of the nations. Everything Christ made possible by laying down his life in sacrifice, and can do now that he lives, is of such greatness as to exceed human comprehension. Appropriately, therefore, Paul spoke of the “unfathomable riches of Christ.” These riches would include being forgiven of sins on the basis of Christ’s sacrificial death, reconciliation with God as beloved children, the prospect of life in a sinless state for all eternity, and the enjoyment of the blessings resulting from a never-ending relationship with God and his Son as part of the family of his beloved children. (3:8; compare 1 Timothy 1:12-16; see the Notes section.)

Another part of Paul’s commission related to bringing to light for “all” or “everyone” the nature of the “stewardship of the mystery” that had for ages been hidden “in God, who created all things.” This stewardship is God’s own arrangement for having his Son be the one with whom everything in heaven and on earth would be brought into a state of unity. Through this divine stewardship or manner of working, humans who had been alienated from God would be reconciled to him as their loving Father. In past ages, this remained a secret “in God,” for he did not reveal just how peoples of all nations could become reconciled to him through the arrangement he would make through his Son. As the Creator of all things, God does everything according to his will and purpose. This included the time for revealing the long-hidden mystery by having his

previously purposed “stewardship” or his own predetermined arrangement for unifying everything in heaven and on earth become operative. (3:9; see the Notes section.)

The revelation of the mystery, by what would become evident “through the congregation” (the community of believers united to Christ as members of his corporate body), would serve to make known to the “rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” the “manifold wisdom of God.” The Scriptures reveal that angels have various functions and responsibilities, with certain ones being “chief princes.” (Daniel 8:15, 16; 9:20, 21; 10:13) Accordingly, the reference to the “rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” may be understood to designate the angels as occupying positions of divinely granted power and authority. As they observe the outworking of God’s arrangement in connection with the congregation, they come to see to an increasing extent his multifaceted wisdom. (Compare 1 Peter 1:10-12.) The many-sided aspects of divine wisdom are seen in the rescue of humans from sin and condemnation, their reconciliation to God, and their inclusion in his family of angelic sons through their coming to be at one with his unique Son, Jesus Christ. (3:10)

The unifying of everything in heaven and on earth that is effected “in Christ Jesus our Lord” (or through oneness with him) constitutes God’s “purpose of the ages,” that is, his purpose from past ages or from the start. As his original purpose, it was no afterthought. (3:11)

In Christ, or as a result of having become united to him, believers have boldness, approaching God with confidence through faith in his Son (literally, “the faith of him,” signifying the faith that has Christ as its object). Because of what the Son of God has done for them, believers do not fear making their approach to the Father. They are confident that their faith in Christ and his sacrificial death for them has made them acceptable. (3:12)

3:13-21

Prayer for knowledge and power

In view of all the benefits that had come to them upon hearing and accepting the glad tidings about Jesus Christ that Paul proclaimed, non-Jewish believers addressed in this letter were not to become discouraged on account of the apostle’s tribulations or afflictions for them, as these meant “glory” for them. Paul’s willingness to endure hardships for the sake of Christ and making known the good news about him revealed that what believers enjoyed because of their faith in Christ proved to be of inestimable value. It was worth suffering for, and so Paul’s confinement and associated difficulties signified glory for those to

whom he wrote. His tribulations, which had resulted from laboring among non-Jews, including people of the nations to whom he wrote, proved that what they possessed because of Christ had priceless value. Paul's suffering confinement for non-Jewish believers or because he had ministered among them, therefore, was no reason for shame but proved to be a basis for proper pride. (3:13)

Verse 14 starts in the same way as verse 1, "thanks to this" or "for this reason," and appears to relate to the words of Ephesians 2:19-22. There the reference is to the changed status of believing non-Jews because of what Jesus Christ had done for them. The marvellous change non-Jewish believers had experienced, along with their sharing in accompanying blessings, prompted Paul to pray for them. He would "bend [his] knees to the Father," assuming a kneeling position when praying. (3:14; see the Notes section.)

From the Father, "every family in the heavens and on earth is named." The Greek word for "father" is *patér*, and all who owe their existence to him are designated as *patriá* (commonly rendered "family"). Accordingly, the reference to "every family in the heavens and on earth" does not mean that there are family arrangements in heaven as there are on earth, but the expression "every family" denotes all who are sons or children of the heavenly Father, both angelic and human. To him, they owe their name, their real identity, or what they truly are as persons. (3:15)

In the case of those to whom he wrote, Paul prayed that the Father, "according to the riches of his glory," would give them power, strengthening them in the "inner man" through his spirit. The "riches" of the Father's "glory" are his vast resources of matchless magnificence or splendor from which he can supply the help and strength that his children, members of his beloved family, need. The "inner man" designates the believer's real self as one who enjoys a newness of life as a child of God. Through the working of God's spirit within the believer, the inner man is energized and strengthened to pursue a divinely approved course regardless of the circumstances.

Paul also prayed that those to whom he wrote might, through faith, have Christ dwell in their hearts. Christ's dwelling in their hearts may be understood to mean that he would continue to be the controlling principle in their inmost selves, guiding their thoughts, words, and deeds. Through their faith in Christ, their life would be so bound up with him as to indicate that they lived for him and that he had totally taken possession of them. (3:17)

The words "in love" could be linked to Christ, which would signify that Paul prayed that Christ, in love, would make his home in the hearts of believers. A

number of translations convey this significance (“that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love” [REB]; “through your faith to let Christ in his love make his home in your hearts” [Goodspeed]). (3:17)

Another possibility is that the phrase “in love” relates to being “rooted and founded,” that is, firmly established like a tree with deep roots and a building on a solid foundation. Numerous translations have adopted the meaning that links “rooted and founded” to the words “in love” (“that you, rooted and grounded in love” [NAB]; “that you, being rooted and established in love” [NIV]; “planted in love and built on love” [NJB]). (3:17)

It was Paul’s prayerful desire that the believers whom he addressed would have the capacity (literally, “be strong”) to comprehend, “with all the holy ones” (all others of God’s own people), the breadth, length, height, and depth, “to know the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge, that [they] might be filled with all the fullness of God.” There is no object with which the breadth, length, height, and depth are associated. Possibly they relate to Christ’s love and the believers’ being able to grasp it to the greatest extent possible. (3:18, 19) A number of translations are explicit in making the application to the love of Christ. “May you, in company with all God’s people, be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge.” (REB) “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.” (NIV)

Christ’s love, expressed in the surrender of his life for sinners and his concern and care for all who have responded and will yet respond in faith to him, is of such greatness as to defy any comparison. It is a love that goes far beyond anything that humans have experienced and so surpasses knowledge. Nevertheless, Paul desired that fellow believers would comprehend the greatness of Christ’s love to the fullest extent possible. (3:19)

20-21 The benediction

In the context of love, the believers’ being “filled with all the fullness of God” may denote their being like their heavenly Father in manifesting love. By his dealings with them through his Son, he has filled believers with his love, impelling them to let love guide their thoughts, words, and deeds. (3:19; compare Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 3:13-18; 4:7-11.)

Paul acknowledged that God, by the “power” at work in believers, could do exceedingly more than all that they could request or imagine. As the apostle had stated earlier, this power was revealed when God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand, granting him a highly exalted position of unparalleled greatness. (1:19-23) With such incomprehensibly great power at work for the benefit of believers, Paul’s prayer for them would be answered. (3:20)

“To [God] be the glory in the congregation and in Christ Jesus to all generations” of the ages to come (literally, “of the age of the ages”). This may be understood to mean that God’s glory, magnificence, or splendor is to be revealed for all eternity in the congregation and in Christ Jesus as the head with whom the community of believers forms a united whole. Another possible meaning is that the congregation would ascribe glory to God, doing so for all eternity. Because Jesus Christ is the head of the congregation, the ascription of glory “in” the body would also be “in Christ,” the head with whom the body forms a corporate whole. The apostle concluded his prayerful expression with “Amen,” meaning “surely” or “so be it.” (3:21; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

In verse 1, numerous manuscripts do not include Jesus after Christ, but this has no bearing on the meaning of the text.

As the absence of “Ephesus” in Ephesians 1:1 suggests, Paul intended this letter to be read to believers besides the original recipients. There is a possibility, therefore, that his use of the words (in 3:2), “if indeed you have heard,” indicated that not all would have been personally acquainted with him.

The oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE) does not include the expression for “holy ones” in verse 8. According to this shorter reading, the apostle identified himself as “the least of all.”

According to another manuscript reading of verse 9 (which does not include the word “all” or “everyone”), Paul’s commission included bringing to light what the stewardship of the mystery is. After the reference to God’s having created all things, many later manuscripts add, “through Jesus Christ.”

After “Father” (in verse 14), numerous manuscripts add, “of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In verse 21, many later manuscripts omit “and” after “congregation” and read, “in the congregation in Christ Jesus,” meaning in the community of believers that is at one with Christ.

Ephesians 4: 1-32

4:1-6

A life worthy of Christ

1-3 The life described

The conjunction *oun* (therefore) points to the reason for Paul’s appeal or entreaty. Based on the preceding context, this reason would be everything believers had come to enjoy through God’s Son and their faith in him. In view of his confinement for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ because of his proclaiming the message about him to people of the nations, the apostle made his appeal as “the prisoner in the Lord.” Being at one with his Lord, he could speak of being “in” him. Paul entreated fellow believers to walk or to conduct themselves worthily of “the calling” to which they had been called. They had been called or invited to become reconciled to God as his approved children. Therefore, they should live lives that gave evidence of their new status as members of his family. (4:1)

The dignity they enjoyed as children of God, however, gave them no reason for a proud bearing. Their changed condition had come about through God’s gracious favor and not any merit on their part. Consequently, they needed to conduct themselves “with all lowliness and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” In their relationship with one another as fellow children of God, they would demonstrate lowliness or humility through their readiness to act in the interests of others, willingly foregoing rights out of regard for them. Within the family of God’s children, harshness has no place. Believers need to be gentle or considerate, responding in kindness to one another. Whereas they have been forgiven of their sins, they are not liberated from their flawed human condition. This necessitates their being patient, forbearing, or tolerant with one another, putting up with one another’s failings in love. (4:2)

The objective of believers should be to put forth earnest effort to maintain the unity that God’s spirit produces, preserving the resultant bond of peace that distinguishes a loving family. (4:3)

All believers are members of just “one body,” the body of Christ that is at one with him as the head. The same spirit, God’s spirit, operates in the case of every believer. All of them are called to the “one hope” of their calling. This one hope,

to which their calling to be God's children has given rise, is their coming to be in the sinless state with Christ. (4:4)

Believers have only "one Lord," the Lord Jesus Christ who surrendered his life for them. They have only "one faith," the faith that centers on Jesus Christ and all that his Father has done through him. There is but "one baptism," the water baptism that signifies repentance and which, through their faith, brings them into a new relationship with God as their Father, his Son as their Lord, and the holy spirit as their helper. (Compare Matthew 28:19; John 14:16, 17.) In Galatians 3:27, the "one baptism" is referred to as a baptism "into Christ." This is because the baptized believers come to be part of Christ's body, joined to him as their head. (4:5)

4-6 The basis of the worthy life

They have only "one God and Father." He is the "God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." As the only God whom all believers recognize, he is over them, working through them to carry out his will and purpose, and operating within them by means of his spirit, progressively transforming them into his image as they yield to his spirit's influence. (4:6; see the Notes section.)

4: 7-16

The ministry and a worthy life

7-11 Christ's gifts for a worthy life

Accordingly, divisions were not to be tolerated in the community of believers. The differing gifts had been imparted to believers for the purpose of promoting unity. Christ had not granted these gifts because anyone merited them. Each one became a recipient of the gracious favour or unmerited kindness according to the way that Christ allotted the gift. So the gift itself proved to be an expression of gracious favour. (4:7)

Paul then used words from Psalm 68:18(19) to support the thought that Christ apportioned gifts, "Having ascended to the height, he led a captivity captive and gave gifts to men." The Septuagint reading (found in Psalm 67:19) is different but expresses the same basic thought. "You ascended to the height; you led a captivity captive. You received gifts in [or, among] man." While "man" is singular in the Septuagint (as it is in the extant Hebrew text), the term may be regarded as a collective singular denoting "men" or "people." Paul appears to have regarded the "captivity" as the conquered powers of darkness over which Jesus Christ, in keeping with his Father's will, triumphed by his death.

(Compare John 16:33; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 3:21.) Upon his ascension to the height, the heavenly realm, he gave gifts to men, that is, to those who were and would come to be part of the community of believers. (4:8; see the Notes section.)

Reasoning on the basis of the word meaning “he ascended,” the apostle, by means of a question, pointed out that this also indicated that Christ had descended into the lower parts of the earth. These “lower parts of the earth” could designate the realm of the dead. Another possibility is that the earthly realm itself is being identified as the lower regions (in contrast to the higher regions or the heavenly realm). Both meanings are found in translations. “When it says, ‘he went up,’ it must mean that he had gone down to the deepest levels of the earth.” (NJB) “What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended into the lower [regions] of the earth?” (NAB) “When it says, ‘he went up,’ it means that Christ had been deep in the earth.” (CEV) “Now, the word ‘ascended’ implies that he also descended to the lowest level, down to the very earth.” (REB) “Notice that it says ‘he ascended.’ This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live.” (NLT) “When it says, ‘He went up,’ what does it mean? It means that he first came down to the earth.” (NCV) Jesus Christ did come down from heaven to the earth and also descended to the deepest part, the realm of the dead. Accordingly, either explanation would be in harmony with the rest of the Scriptures. (4:9)

Jesus Christ, the one who descended, “is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.” After coming to the earth, which meant assuming a condition of humiliation, and laying down his life in sacrifice, he was highly exalted. In his exalted state, he is now “above all the heavens” and in a position to “fill all things.” His influence and sustaining power pervade all things that come to be at one with him, and thus he fills everything. (4:10)

The gifts Christ, after his ascension, gave to the community of believers were apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. Apostles were men sent forth, either directly by the Lord Jesus Christ or by communities of believers (under the guidance of God’s spirit) as messengers to declare the good news about the Son of God. (Matthew 10:1-7; Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-6; Acts 9:1-6, 15; 13:1-3; 26:12-18) Evangelists also were proclaimers of the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. What appears to have distinguished evangelists who were not also apostles from the apostles was their not having been specifically sent forth. They did, however, act in accordance with the guidance of God’s spirit as they faithfully proclaimed the message about Jesus Christ. (Acts 8:5-8; 26-40)

Apostles filled the roles of prophets, shepherds, and teachers. Other men also served in these capacities. While prophets at times did foretell future events, they primarily made known God's will, sharing words of encouragement that served to strengthen fellow believers. (Acts 11:27, 28; 15:32) Shepherds cared for the needs of fellow believers, being particularly concerned about their spiritual welfare as members of God's congregation. (Acts 20:28) Teachers provided instruction for fellow believers. When expounding on the Scriptures, teachers would aid the hearers to understand the written word, enabling them to make personal application in their lives as members of God's beloved family. (1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:1-11; 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 4:1, 2; James 3:1)

12-16 Purpose of the gifts

The gifts granted in the form of various functions faithful men would carry out as part of the community of believers served to "prepare the holy ones for the work of service, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain the oneness of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to [the state of] a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The "work of service" would be any service rendered in response to the needs of others, including providing food and clothing. (Acts 6:1-6; 9:36, 39) Loving response to the spiritual and material needs of fellow believers contributes to the building up of the entire congregation, forming strong bonds of affection among all. With faithful men functioning as Christ's gifts for the benefit of everyone, the whole body would be built up. (4:12, 13)

Within the community of believers, individuals differ with reference to the measure of their faith and knowledge of God's Son. Sound teaching should help all to attain ever greater faith and to draw closer to Jesus Christ, coming to know him in a more intimate personal relationship. This would make the unity of faith and knowledge become evident to an increasingly greater degree. The community of believers would be growing to become a "mature man" and making progress in attaining the measure of the full stature that Christ exemplified during the course of his life on earth. (4:13)

To resist the influence of wrong or destructive teaching, believers need to have a strong faith and to be solidly grounded in the truth about God and Christ. It would be dangerous for them to remain "babes," as their faith would be too fragile to withstand being tossed to and fro like a light object by false doctrines that appear plausible and exert a powerful influence comparable to the wind. As mere babes, believers could not easily recognize the trickery, cunning, and deceit of those who teach falsehood. (4:14)

According to most manuscripts, the first word of verse 15 is a form of *aletheúō*, meaning “to be truthful,” and can either denote “to speak the truth” or “to live the truth.” Both meanings are found in modern translations. “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (NRSV) “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” (NIV) “Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ.” (NAB) “But we are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ, the head.” (J. B. Phillips) The conjunction *δέ* (but) serves to contrast the course faithful believers would be pursuing with the trickery, cunning, and deceit to which the proponents of falsehood resort. (4:15; see the Notes section.)

Believers, whether speaking or living the truth, would be guided by love. In every way or in all things, their growing would be “into Christ,” becoming progressively more like him as members of the body of which he is the head. (4:15)

Everything the body needs comes from Christ, the head. The body is joined together and made to function together “through every ligament of supply.” The expression “ligament of supply” may be understood to designate a body part that is connected to another and makes its needed contribution for the proper functioning of the body. As each part works in keeping with its “measure” or its proper function, the body grows and builds itself up “in love.” When everyone in the community of believers is at one with Christ and the individual members are supportive and caring, the body grows, increasingly becoming more like Christ. The body is built up “in love.” This could mean that, for the body or the community of believers to be built up, love is the essential element. Without love, the body would be weak and fragmented. None of the members would be built up or strengthened in their faith and devotion. (4:16)

4: 17-29

The new self and a worthy life

17-22 The old self put off

There is a possibility that the words “in love” may be understood yet another way. As the body grows, coming to be more like Christ, it becomes more loving. With the individual members manifesting love to a greater degree, the whole body would be built up in love. (4:16; see the Notes section.)

To add solemnity to the point he was about to make, Paul said, “This, then, I say and testify in the Lord.” Thus he expressed himself as one who was at one with the Lord Jesus Christ and who spoke in his name. The apostle urged believers to stop “walking” or conducting themselves as did people of the nations, persons whose life revealed an emptiness of mind. Those of the nations failed seriously in using their mental faculties in a noble way. (4:17; see the Notes section.)

Their moral corruption demonstrated that their thinking faculties had been darkened. As if blindfolded, they conducted themselves without any regard for the consequences, harming themselves and others. (Compare Romans 1:18-32.) On account of their self-imposed ignorance and the “callousness of their heart” (or the unresponsiveness of their inner selves to the voice of conscience), they were “alienated from the life of God.” The “life of God” could refer to the newness of life that has God as its source or could designate the honourable life God meant for humans to live. (4:18)

In this context, the Greek word *apalgéo* appears to denote an absence of a sense of shame. Insensitive to any discomfort from a guilty conscience, people of the nations gave themselves up to shockingly indecent behavior or unrestrained debauchery. They engaged in unclean or defiling practices “in greediness [*pleonexía*].” The Greek word *pleonexía* denotes an inordinate desire for more. It is an extreme passion or addiction expressed in wanting more without any regard for others or the hurtful effect it might have on them. So, when performing all kinds of filthy practices, people of the nations did so with a passion for more and more indecent things to satisfy their lusts. (4:19)

Believers, however, did not learn from Christ the kind of moral corruption that existed among people of the nations. (4:20) If they had indeed heard him, having paid attention to his words as conveyed by those who had been with him, and had been “taught in him,” they would have known that Jesus Christ lived a life untainted by any trace of defilement or impurity. To be taught “in” Christ may mean to be taught as a believer who has come to be at one with him as a member of his body. Having heard and been taught, the believers whom Paul addressed knew that “truth is in Jesus.” At all times, Jesus Christ spoke the truth that his Father had taught him. Through him alone (his words, his deeds, his disposition), full knowledge about his Father is revealed. Jesus’ blameless life confirmed that the truth is indeed in him. (4:21)

In keeping with what they had heard and been taught, believers needed to strip off “the old man” of their former behaviour, the old self that had been corrupted by “desires of deceptions” or desires that, if acted upon, appeared to lead to gain but, in the end, would result in loss or harm. (4:22)

23-29 The new self put on

They needed to be renewed in the “spirit” of their minds. Instead of the former spirit that impelled them to think and act in corrupt or debased ways, a new spirit, a new activating or motivating power produced through the operation of God’s spirit, should be guiding their thinking, speaking, and acting. (4:23)

With the “old man” having been put away, believers should be putting on the “new man” or the new self that is created “according to God in righteousness and holiness [*hosiótes*] of the truth.” In being “according to God,” the new self conforms to his image and becomes evident in an upright life. The Greek word *hosiótes* is descriptive of devoutness and purity. “In righteousness and holiness of the truth” could mean that the truth (with particular focus on Jesus Christ and all that he accomplished when surrendering his life) produces uprightness and purity. Another possibility is that “truth” here applies to true, actual, or real righteousness and holiness. (4:24)

Having put on the “new man” that is fashioned according to God’s likeness, believers should put away falsehood or everything that is opposed to truth, dependability, or trustworthiness. They are fellow members of the body of Christ. Therefore, in their dealings with one another, each one of them should be speaking the truth to his neighbour or fellow. Among them, a spirit of complete trust and dependability should prevail. (4:25; see the Notes section.)

Believers have been forgiven of their sins and are divinely approved on the basis of Christ’s righteousness and their faith in him. They, however, are not yet in possession of the sinless state. At times, in their interactions with one another, their failings and missteps can be a source of irritation. Therefore, the words of the psalmist (Psalm 4:5, LXX), which Paul quoted, are most appropriate, “Be angry and do not sin.” The anger or irritation resulting from the wrong that may have been committed should not be allowed to grow to the point where the transgression is countered by hateful words or actions. Grudges should not be permitted to develop. So, as the apostle admonished, the sun should not set while the individual is still in an angry state. (4:26)

The devil should not be given a place where he can undermine the unity that believers have as members of Christ’s body. If feelings of anger or ill-will toward fellow believers were to take hold, this would serve the devil’s purpose. It would create disharmony in the community of believers and be destructive especially to those with a fragile faith. (4:27)

Before becoming believers, some may have been thieves. Any who formerly were guilty of stealing were to stop and, instead, work hard with their “own [according to numerous manuscripts] hands,” taking care of their needs through honest labour. Besides no longer taking things from others, they should make it their aim to have enough to be able to share with the needy. (4:28)

The mouths of believers should not be used to utter rotten, degrading, or unwholesome words. Their speech should be good for building up others, addressing their needs in a wholesome and encouraging manner. This would result in imparting what is gracious or favourable to the hearers. (4:29)

4: 30-32

The Holy Spirit and worthy life

30 The Holy Spirit is grieved by an unholy life

Believers had been sealed with God’s spirit for the “day of redemption.” This sealing with God’s spirit marked them as his approved children and served as a guarantee of their future redemption or absolute deliverance from sin. For them to act contrary to the guidance or influence of God’s spirit would have meant that they had grieved the spirit. They were to avoid such grieving, or such an outrageous resistance of the spirit’s influence for good. (4:30)

All bitterness, fury, anger, screaming, and blasphemy or abusive speech, along with all evil or badness of every kind, should be banished from the midst of God’s family of approved children. (4:31) Instead, they should be “kind to one another,” compassionate and forgiving. They have a powerful incentive to manifest a loving spirit, for “God in Christ has forgiven” them. God’s forgiveness is “in Christ,” for his Son’s surrender of his life provided the basis for all who would respond in faith to be pardoned of their sins. (4:32; see the Notes section.)

Notes:

Later copyists seemingly wanted to make “all” (the last word in verse 6) to apply explicitly to believers and added either *hymín* (you) or *hemín* (us).

In verse 8, many manuscripts, including P46 (c. 200 CE), do not include “and” (*kai*). Without the “and,” the text reads, “Having ascended to the height, he led a captivity captive; he gave gifts to men.”

After “descended” (in verse 9), many manuscripts add “first.” The oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE) and a number of others omit the word “parts.”

In a number of manuscripts, the first word of verse 15 is “truth” (a form of *alétheia*). These manuscripts contain a verb that means “to do” (a form of *poiéo*) and so convey the thought of living or practicing the truth.

In verse 16, the point relating to Christ as head (“from whom all the body”) is not completed. This aspect of the Greek text is preserved in the more literal renderings of modern translations. “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” (NRSV) “From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love.” (NAB)

Though not stated in the text of verse 16, the implication is that the head is essential in supplying what the body needs. A number of translations have added words to make this significance explicit. “The whole body depends on Christ, and all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the whole body grow and be strong with love.” (NCV) “For it is from the head that the whole body, as a harmonious structure knit together by the joints with which it is provided, grows by the proper functioning of individual parts to its full maturity in love.” (J. B. Phillips) “And on him the whole body depends. Bonded and held together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the proper functioning of each part, and builds itself up in love.” (REB)

It is noteworthy that the apostle’s focus was not on growth in numbers but on growth of the body as a community of believers that progressively becomes more like Christ.

In many manuscripts (in verse 17), the word “rest” precedes the term “nations” (rest of the nations), thereby indicating that the reference is to non-Jews. The oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE) and numerous others, however, do not include the word “rest.”

The words of verse 25 about speaking the truth are not introduced as a quotation. A similar thought is expressed in Zechariah 8:16 (LXX), “Speak truth each [one] with his neighbour.”

In verse 32, manuscripts read either “God in Christ has forgiven you” or “God in Christ has forgiven us.”

Ephesians 5: 1-33

5: 1-17

Imitators of God and a holy life

1-7 Imitating God as children of love

“Therefore” (in view of God’s great love in granting forgiveness), Paul continued, “become imitators of God as beloved children.” As members of his family, believers would rightly seek to be like their loving Father. (5:1)

They would then “walk” or conduct themselves “in love,” responding in a caring and compassionate manner toward others. In this regard, they additionally have the example of Christ. In expression of his love for us, “he gave himself for us [as] an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma.” Christ’s surrender of his life for us demonstrated his great love for his Father, for he was delighted to carry out his Father’s will despite the personal humiliation and suffering it meant for him. Accordingly, his offering up himself and laying down his life sacrificially proved to be like a pleasing aroma to God. (5:2; see the Notes section.)

Believers are a “holy people” because of what God has done for them through his Son, and this should be reflected in all aspects of their life. Sexual immorality, uncleanness (or anything of an impure, debased, or defiling nature), and greediness or the inordinate desire for more and more should not even “be named” or mentioned. Such debased things should not be talked about among believers in a manner that is characteristic of persons who are alienated from God, because this would not be fitting for a holy or clean people. (5:3)

Degraded talk would include anything of a shameful or indecent nature, foolish or senseless expressions, and obscene jesting. Believers should banish all filthy speaking from their midst and, instead, give thanks to God for everything that he has done for them. (5:4)

They were fully aware of the need to shun the degraded ways of the world at enmity with God. This is because they knew that no sexually immoral person, unclean or corrupt individual, or one given to covetousness or greed would have an inheritance “in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” In the realm where God is recognized as Sovereign and Christ is acknowledged as Lord and King by his Father’s appointment, individuals who choose to continue living corrupt lives will never be granted a place. (5:5; see the Notes section regarding the phrase “which is an idolater.”)

There were corrupt individuals who tried to deceive believers. Based on what is written elsewhere in the Scriptures, these proponents of falsehood represented God's mercy as allowing believers to engage in degraded practices. (Compare 2 Peter 2:18, 19; Jude 4.) For this reason, Paul warned fellow believers not to be deceived by "empty words," or arguments that may have sounded plausible but had absolutely no validity. Impurity and corruption had no place in the community of believers, for God's coming wrath would be directed against the "sons of disobedience," or against those who defiantly engaged in the kind of degrading practices that Paul had mentioned. They were "sons" or children of disobedience because they followed a way of life that was subject to disobedience to God. (5:6)

Disobedient persons will not escape divine judgment. Therefore, Paul urged those to whom he wrote not to become "sharers" with them, yielding to their deceptive words and then engaging in divinely disapproved acts. (5:7)

8-17 Imitating God as children of light

Formerly, believers were in darkness or in a state of ignorance about God and his will, living in a divinely disapproved manner. Upon putting faith in God's Son, they ceased to be in darkness. In him, or by coming to be united to him as members of his body, they came to be "light," or persons who were both in the light and could serve as light in aiding others to escape the darkness of ignorance and sin. In harmony with their new status, they should walk or conduct themselves as "children of light," persons who had been liberated from their former condition of darkness. (5:8)

Unlike darkness, which is associated with corrupt deeds that those engaging in them feel a need to conceal, light is not linked to activity that is shameful. The "fruit of the light" embraces all "goodness" (or moral excellence that manifests itself in active concern for the welfare of others), everything that is "righteous," upright, or just, and "truth," or whatever is dependable or trustworthy. (5:9; see the Notes section.)

Believers should make it their aim to "determine [*dokimázo*] what is pleasing to the Lord." The Greek word *dokimázo* basically means "to test" or "to prove." In this particular context, the term relates to endeavoring to find out, establish, or determine and then to act accordingly. Believers recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord. Conduct that pleases him would also meet his Father's approval. A number of manuscripts read, "what is pleasing to God." (5:10)

To be recognized as belonging to their Lord, believers cannot share in the “unfruitful works of darkness,” but must, instead, “reprove” them. The “works of darkness” are the disgraceful acts that those who engage in them try to conceal from the view of others or from being perceived for what they are. These “works” are “unfruitful,” for they produce nothing that is good or wholesome. Rather than having any part in the disgraceful works of darkness, disciples of Christ should “reprove” or expose these works, making manifest how disgraceful and injurious they really are. (5:11)

The things that those alienated from God do in secret, or hidden from the view of others, are too shameful even to mention. (5:12) Corrupt individuals, besides engaging in disgraceful practices while endeavouring not to be seen or discovered, may also try to entice others with deceptive reasoning, trying to make what is shameful appear to be acceptable. Everything that light exposes, however, “is made manifest.” Whenever debased practices are properly shown up as if a bright light had been focused on them, they will be recognized for what they are. (5:13) Everything that is thus made manifest “is light,” for that which has been exposed has been revealed as to its real nature and shown up as something to be shunned and abhorred. (5:14)

The quotation that follows seemingly serves to show that the exposing light is the light from Christ. “Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Christ’s example and teaching provide the needed illumination for identifying the “works of darkness.” Those who are asleep, oblivious to the true nature of these works, need to wake up. All who are dead in trespasses and sins need to arise by accepting God’s arrangement through his Son to be forgiven of their sins. As persons no longer in a state of sleep and dead in sin, they will benefit from the illumination Jesus Christ makes available. (5:14; see the Notes section.)

In view of the corrupt influences to which believers were subjected, Paul admonished them to watch carefully how they walked or conducted themselves. Their way of life should be one of wise persons, not unwise or senseless ones. Conduct that harmonizes with God’s will is wise, for it results in lasting benefits. A failure to follow his guidance leads to a disastrous outcome, with harm to the individual and to others who may be affected. This failure characterizes the walk or conduct of unwise persons. (5:15)

Believers are urged to “redeem [literally, ‘buy out’] the time, because the days are evil.” In this context, redeeming the time could denote to make the best use of time or to redeem it for beneficial purposes from waste or misuse. (5:16) Modern translations commonly render the expression to refer either to time or

opportunity. “Make the best of the present time, for it is a wicked age.” (NJB) “These are evil times, so make every minute count.” (CEV) “Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days.” (J. B. Phillips) “Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil.” (NAB) “Use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days.” (REB) “Use every chance for doing good, because these are evil times.” (NCV)

The believers to whom Paul wrote found themselves living in a corrupt world. For this reason, he referred to the “days,” times, or age in which they lived as “evil.” (5:16) So it was essential for them to avoid being foolish, yielding to the baneful influences with which they were faced. They needed to make sure that they were aware of or understood the will of the Lord. Their rightly perceiving his will would have meant acting in harmony therewith. Numerous later manuscripts read, “the will of God,” but the oldest extant manuscript (P46, c. 200 CE) says, “Christ.” This difference is immaterial, for the will of the Lord Jesus Christ is the same as that of his Father. (5:17)

5: 18-20

The filling of the Spirit and a worthy life

18 The true elixir of life and the false

In the Greco-Roman world, excessive drinking of wine was common, especially in conjunction with festivals and celebrations of triumphs and other events. Therefore, when conducting themselves as wise persons, believers would be moderate in their use of wine, avoiding intoxication and the dissipation or harmful effects associated therewith. Instead of deriving stimulation from wine, they should make it their aim to be filled with spirit, letting God’s spirit exert the wholesome influence that produces real joy and a genuine sense of well-being. (5:18)

19-20 The result of being Spirit filled

When allowing the holy spirit to guide them, believers would be able to speak to one another (literally, “speaking to selves [*heautoís*]”) in an encouraging manner, using the words of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Psalms would have been the sacred songs found in the book of Psalms. Both the hymns (praises directed to God) and the spiritual songs (compositions pertaining to spiritual matters) would have been Christian compositions. Believers experienced joy from singing and making music in their “heart” to the Lord. Such singing and making music to the Lord Jesus Christ stemmed from the “heart,” or the inmost

self, and expressed appreciation for all that he accomplished by laying down his life for them and continuing to aid them. (5:19; see the Notes section.)

Always and for everything, believers should be giving thanks to God, their heavenly Father, “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” By continuing to acknowledge God as the source of all that they enjoy, believers are drawn closer to him as their loving, caring, and compassionate heavenly Father. Through their expressions of thanks in prayer, the importance of their relationship with him and dependence on him for everything are kept prominently in view. When rendering thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, believers acknowledge that everything they have received from his Father has been made possible through him. (5:20)

5:21-33

Husbands, wives and a worthy life

21 The general principle

“In fear of Christ,” or out of reverential regard for him as their Lord, believers should subject themselves to one another. They would do so by willingly and eagerly functioning as caring and unassuming servants in response to the needs of fellow believers (5:21; compare Matthew 23:11; Luke 9:48; 22:26; John 13:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9:19; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:3, 4; see the Notes section.)

22-24 The duty of wives

Within the family or as members of a household, the believers’ subjection depended on the position they occupied. Their being submissive, however, was not an expression of forced servitude. When conscientiously caring for their duties and responsibilities, wives would be subjecting themselves to their own husbands “as to the Lord.” This ennobled their being submissive to them, for their subjection demonstrated their recognition of and desire to please Christ as their Lord and as the one who had died for them and made it possible for them to become his Father’s beloved children. (5:22)

In the family, the submissiveness of wives as to the Lord is based on the divinely assigned role of husbands. “The husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ [is] the head of the congregation.” Additionally, Christ is the “savior of the body.” Through his death, he delivered believers, or those who became members of his body, from sin and condemnation and reconciled them to his Father. By his Father’s appointment, he is the head of the congregation and is

rightly such because of everything he has done for the community or family of believers. Similarly, the husband occupies the God-given place as head of his own family. This is based on the original priority of existence, the man having been created first and then the woman. (5:23; compare 1 Timothy 2:13.)

“As the congregation submits to Christ, so also [should] wives to their husbands in everything.” The community of believers seeks to follow Christ’s guidance and direction, which is always right and beneficial. He would never require anyone to do something that is injurious, and so a wife’s submissiveness “in everything” could not include cooperating with her husband in committing moral wrongs. (5:24)

25-33 The duty of husbands

Members of Christ’s congregation are not sinless, and so their individual submission to him is not free from flaw. Accordingly, the example that wives are called upon to imitate is not one of absolute perfection. Husbands, however, in keeping with their weighty responsibility as family heads, are to imitate Christ, the sinless one. They are to love their wives “as also Christ loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it.” The love of God’s Son proved to be of unparalleled greatness, for he sacrificed his very life for those who would become part of his body or his congregation. This is the kind of self-sacrificing love husbands are to have for their wives. (5:25)

Christ’s love, care, and concern for the congregation has not ended. He surrendered his life to sanctify the congregation or to make it pure or holy in the eyes of his Father. With the “washing of the water in the word,” Jesus Christ cleansed the congregation. (5:26)

The context does not make it possible to be certain about what this washing signifies. A number of translations interpretively identify the “washing of the water” as being baptism (“washed by baptism and God’s word” [NLT]; “cleansing her with the baptismal water by the word” [Weymouth]), and the word has been represented as designating the confession made at the time of baptism (*im Wasser der Taufe und das dabei gesprochene Wort* [in the water of baptism and the word then spoken (*Gute Nachricht Bibel*, German)]). According to another view, the washing is figurative. *Durch sein Wort hat er den Schmutz ihrer Verfehlungen wie in einem reinigenden Bad von ihr abgewaschen.* (Through his word he has washed away the dirt of her transgressions as with a cleansing bath. [*Neue Genfer Übersetzung*, German]) If the expression is figurative, the “word” may be understood to denote the message about Christ, as faith in him and what he

accomplished by surrendering his life had made the cleansing from sin possible. (5:26)

Christ's ultimate purpose is to present the congregation to himself like a virgin bride in a state of glory, splendor, or honor. In a condition of virgin purity, the congregation would be without a "stain," "wrinkle," or any similar flaw. As his bride, the community of believers would be holy or pure and unblemished in all respects. (5:27)

In harmony with the example of Jesus Christ's love for the congregation, believing husbands are obligated to love their wives as they do "their own bodies, for whoever loves his wife loves himself." In the intimate marriage relationship, husband and wife come to be one. Therefore, a husband's loving his wife means loving himself. (5:28)

People who do not love themselves are the exception, not the norm. "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as also [does] Christ [the Lord, according to other manuscripts] the congregation." Individuals do not customarily loathe themselves to the point of totally neglecting their bodily needs. Most people do whatever they can to obtain the necessities of life. As the head of the congregation, Christ continues to provide aid and guidance through the holy spirit that functions as the helper for believers. (5:29) Individually, believers are members of Christ's body, benefiting personally from him as their head. (5:30; see the Notes section.)

To emphasize the closeness existing between husbands and wives and what that relationship reveals about Christ and the community of believers, Paul quoted from Genesis 2:24 (LXX), "On this account [the woman's being of the same flesh and bones as the man], a man will leave [his] father and mother, and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." A man leaves his own parents to enter a relationship with a woman who had once been a stranger to him, forming a more intimate union than the one existing between himself and the parents whom he has always known. (5:31)

"This mystery is great," the apostle continued, "but now I am speaking of Christ and the congregation." The union of two former strangers reveals the mystery of how believers from all nations and races and from very different backgrounds and stations in life become members of a loving and united corporate body that is at one with the head, God's Son. (5:32)

Returning to the subject relating to the relationship of husbands and wives, the apostle continued, "Moreover, each of you also should so love his wife as he

[does] himself, and the wife should fear the husband.” (5:33) Believing husbands would want to treat their wives in the loving and caring manner in which they would treat themselves. The kind of “fear” here mentioned is not dread and alarm, but designates a proper regard or respect.

Notes:

In verse 2, certain manuscripts read “you,” not “us.” This difference, however, has no significant bearing on the meaning of the text.

With apparent reference to the greedy or covetous person, verse 5 (according to the reading of the oldest extant manuscripts and many others) says, “which is an idolater.” Numerous other manuscripts read, “who is an idolater.” The object of a person’s greed or covetousness takes on such importance and gives rise to such intense desire that it becomes an idol, claiming the kind of attachment that rightfully belongs only to God.

In verse 9, numerous later manuscripts refer to the “fruit of the spirit” (not the “fruit of the light”). The reading “spirit” may have arisen on the basis of Galatians 5:22.

No specific passage in the preserved Hebrew Scriptures nor in the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, parallels the quotation in verse 14. Possibly the quotation is from a Christian composition. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 confirm that such compositions or songs existed. In a number of manuscripts, the concluding phrase reads differently, “And you will grasp [form of *epipsaúo*] Christ.”

The Greek reflexive pronoun (*heautoís*), in verse 19, is probably to be understood as meaning “to one another.” This is the significance the pronoun clearly has in Ephesians 4:32, where the reference is to forgiving one another. In verse 19, modern translations commonly represent the reflexive pronoun as meaning “one another.” “Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and songs; sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.” (REB) “Sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves, singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts.” (NJB) “Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord.” (NCV)

In verse 21, manuscripts variously read, “in fear of Christ,” “in fear of Jesus Christ,” “in fear of the Lord,” and “in fear of God.” The reading with the best manuscript support is, “in fear of Christ.”

After “his body” (in verse 30), a number of later manuscripts add, “of his flesh and of his bones.”

Ephesians 6: 1-24

6: 1-4

Children, parents and a worthy life

1-3 Injunction to children

Paul admonished children to be obedient to their parents. According to many manuscripts, the expression “in the Lord” appears in connection with this admonition. This may apply to the parents as being “in the Lord” or at one with him as members of his body. Another possibility is that the directive is for children to obey their parents out of regard for Jesus Christ as their Lord. The apostle added the reason for obedience, “for this is righteous.” It is only right that children obey their parents, as it reflects a proper regard for the love, attention, and guidance they received during the most vulnerable part of their lives. Without adult care, babies cannot survive, and children continue to be dependent for years thereafter. (6:1)

Furthermore, obedience to parents is right because it harmonizes with God’s will. The apostle quoted the God-given command found in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 (LXX), “Honour your father and mother.” Such honor would include obedient response to parental direction. Most parents are concerned about the welfare of their children and try to give the kind of advice that will be helpful and beneficial. Therefore, when children defiantly ignore their parents, they dishonor them. (6:2)

Of the Ten Commandments, the command to honor father and mother is the first one to which a promise is attached. (6:2) Paul’s quotation of the promise is shorter than the extant Septuagint reading of Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 but expresses the same meaning. The promise is, “that it may be well with you and you may be long-lived on the earth.” Sound parental guidance serves to safeguard children from pursuing a wayward course that is destructive to well-being and can result in a premature death. (6:3; compare Proverbs 1:8-7:27.)

4 The injunction to fathers

Fathers are cautioned not to provoke or anger their children. This could happen if fathers are unreasonable or harsh with their children, demanding much more from them than they could possibly do and administering discipline inconsistently and with unwarranted severity. Instead, they need to rear their

children in the “discipline and admonition of the Lord.” The discipline or training and the directives fathers give to their children to avoid or to desist from a wrong course should be based on the example and teaching of their Lord Jesus Christ. (6:4)

6:5-9

Servants, masters and a worthy life

5-8 Servants to obey

In the Greco-Roman world, many believers were slaves and so had lords “according to the flesh,” or human masters. When slaves became disciples of God’s Son, they were to conduct themselves in a manner that honored him. This called for them to obey their masters with “fear and trembling, in sincerity of [their] heart, as to Christ.” Obeying “with fear and trembling” would denote manifesting proper regard or respect for their masters and maintaining a wholesome apprehension of not wanting to displease them and incur their anger. Such obedience, however, was not to be a mere outward expression. It was to be a reflection of a sincere heart, or the inmost self, as if the services rendered were directly done for Jesus Christ. (6:5)

In performing their assigned duties, slaves were to be exemplary, avoiding “eye service as to men” or working only while they were being watched or just enough to escape punishment. They were slaves of Christ, and so their desire should have been to do “the will of God” with every fibre of their very being (literally, “out of the soul”). (6:6)

As believers, they were to render service to their masters with a good attitude as to Lord Jesus Christ and not merely to men. (6:7) While conscientiously serving their masters in a manner that honoured Christ, they could do so with the certain knowledge that he would repay them for whatever good they might do individually. Whether slaves or free, believers could rest assured that the Lord Jesus Christ would not fail to reward faithfulness. Unlike human masters who might be unjust, Jesus Christ would never treat anyone unfairly. (6:8)

9 Masters to obey

Among believers in the first century CE, some were masters and obligated to follow the example of Jesus Christ. In their dealings with their slaves, they were to do “the same things to them,” probably meaning that they should manifest the same disposition and uprightness as they would expect from believing slaves. In imitation of Christ, they would not threaten their slaves or abuse them in any way. Though “lords” or masters, they, like their slaves, were subject to their

Lord in the heavens, and he is not partial. Jesus Christ would not look with favor on any master who mistreated his slave. (6:9)

6: 10-20

Spiritual conflict and a worthy life

10-12 The warrior's resources

In view of the pressures that believers faced as they endeavoured to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, they needed strength to resist succumbing to destructive influences. This required that they be empowered in him and in the “might of his strength.” They would need to rely on him for strength, remaining at one with him as their Lord. The “might of his strength” is far greater than anything they could possibly imagine and so would be more than adequate to be victorious in the trials and struggles they would encounter. (6:10)

Believers had an enemy, and to win in the fight against this enemy they needed spiritual protection and weaponry, which God could supply. The apostle urged believers to “put on the armour of God,” making it possible for them to stand against the “schemes of the devil.” They would be able to recognize the crafty deception and have the strength to resist it. (6:11)

The apostle indicated that believers have a real fight on their hands. It is not a “wrestling” or battling against “blood and flesh,” or a warring against other humans, but it is a struggle against the powers of darkness of the superterrestrial realm. The powers of darkness are described as “sovereignities,” “authorities,” “world rulers of this darkness” or, according to other manuscripts, “world rulers of the darkness of this age,” and “spirit powers of evil in the heavenly places.” This superterrestrial realm of darkness manifested itself in the enslavement of people to superstition, fear, ignorance, and a corrupt way of life characterized by moral degradation, hatred, violence, and inhumanity. (6:12; see the Notes section.)

13-20 The warrior's use of his resources

To be prepared for the assault that had its source in the realm of darkness, believers needed to take up the “armor of God,” enabling them to withstand “in the evil day and, having done everything, to stand [firm].” The “evil day” appears to denote any time of trouble, trial, or distress. (Compare Psalm 41:1; 49:5.) “Everything” that believers would be doing may refer to “all” the essential efforts for gaining the victory in the fight against the powers of darkness. (6:13)

Like soldiers, believers were to stand fast while properly protected and equipped for battle. A soldier's girdle provided support, protection, and a place from which a sword or dagger could be suspended. The "truth," particularly as it relates to Jesus Christ and what he revealed about his Father, serves like a protective and supporting girdle. A breastplate protects the heart and other vital organs. The "breastplate of righteousness" shields the inmost self of the believer from harmful desires. On the basis of faith in Christ and what his death accomplished for them, believers have gained a righteous or divinely approved standing before God. Nevertheless, they are not sinless and so need to cooperate with the leading of God's spirit to maintain their approved standing, seeking to be attached to uprightness as if it were a protective breastplate and thus resisting temptations to be drawn into sin. (6:14)

Paul likened the sandals for the feet to the believer's being prepared in relation to the "evangel of peace." The evangel is the good news about Christ, which reveals how "peace" or reconciliation with God is possible. Believers should be prepared or in a state of readiness to share this message at every opportunity. (6:15)

"In everything" or, according to other manuscripts, "with" (literally, "upon") "everything" or "all," believers need to take up the "shield of faith," with which they would be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the wicked one. The introductory words may be understood to mean either "in all circumstances" or "upon being equipped with all the armour previously mentioned." Faith enables believers to recognize that the trials and troubles of the present are but momentary and that the divine promises are sure to be fulfilled. Therefore, the devil's assaults, comparable to fiery missiles, would prove to be ineffective in causing spiritual harm to those who hold fast to their faith. The protective barrier faith provides would prevent any destructive "fire" from causing injury, for believers would not yield to the pressure to succumb to sin. (6:16)

"Salvation" functions as a helmet. In this case, "salvation" may be understood to refer to the future deliverance upon which the believer's hope is to remain fixed. While having an approved standing before God, believers are yearning for the time when they will be completely liberated from sin and reflect the image of their heavenly Father flawlessly. Like a protective helmet, the believer's focus on salvation safeguards the mental powers from yielding to God-dishonoring influences that could jeopardize sharing in the ultimate deliverance from sin. (6:17)

The "sword of the spirit" is "God's word." It is God's word or message, specifically about his Son and what he accomplished through him, that functions

like an effective sword in combating error and being successful in the fight against the powers of darkness. Its being called the “sword of the spirit” may identify God’s word or message as having been revealed through the operation of his spirit. (6:17)

“Through all prayer and supplication” may point to the vital means for standing fast when facing satanic assaults. “Supplication” may denote a more intense form of appeal to God than does “prayer,” and “all” could refer to every kind of prayer and supplication (private, silent, audible, public [while assembled with fellow believers], praise, thanksgiving, and appeals for help or guidance). At all times or on every occasion, prayers and supplications should be expressed “in spirit” or while being guided by God’s spirit. While praying, one should remain awake or alert “with all perseverance,” not allowing the mind to wander and not beginning to repeat words without careful attention. “All perseverance” in remaining alert while praying suggests that one would persist in prayer, with every effort being made to keep the mind focused. Prayers, as Paul continued, included “supplication for all the holy ones” or all fellow believers. (6:18)

He requested that the recipients of his letter would pray for him, so that he “might be given a word” or message, enabling him to open his mouth with “boldness to make known the mystery of the evangel.” It was the apostle’s desire to be granted a message or the right words to speak when bearing witness regarding the Son of God. He wanted to do so with boldness, courageously and with firm conviction, making known the glad tidings about Jesus Christ and his Father’s purpose respecting him. This good news had long been a mystery or been hidden from past generations. With the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth and the surrender of his life, the time had come for the mystery to be disclosed and proclaimed far and wide. (6:19; see the Notes section.)

As an apostle to the nations, Paul had been diligent in making known the “mystery.” On account of discharging his commission among the non-Jewish peoples, he came to be in confinement and, at the time this letter was written, found himself as an “ambassador in chains.” In his role as an ambassador for Christ, he had proclaimed the message about him and the significance of his death. The apostle also made an appeal to those who heard him to become reconciled to God. (6:20; compare 2 Corinthians 5:20.)

Paul repeated the reason he had asked fellow believers to pray for him. He wanted to have divine help to declare the mystery of the evangel with boldness, speaking just as he should. (6:20)

6:21-24

Personal note; closing salutation

21-22 Personal note.

Paul appears to have entrusted the letter to Tychicus, whom he called a “beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord” (a dear fellow believer who had revealed himself to be a trustworthy servant in furthering the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ). With firsthand knowledge about Paul’s affairs, Tychicus would have been able to share specifics with fellow believers and relate everything about him. (6:21) This was, in fact, the reason Paul sent Tychicus, wanting those to whom the letter was sent to know about him and to “console [their] hearts.” Having learned about the apostle’s confinement, they would have been deeply concerned and troubled in their “hearts” or inmost selves. (Compare Ephesians 3:13.) The report Tychicus could give would serve to comfort them, allaying their anxiety. Moreover, the fellowship they would enjoy with him would provide opportunities for mutual encouragement. (6:22)

23-24 Closing salutations (Peace, love, faith and grace are mentioned in benediction and blessing.

The letter concludes with a prayerful expression. “Peace to the brothers [‘holy ones,’ according to P46 (c. 200 CE)] and love [‘mercy’ (fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus)] with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Favour [be] with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness.” (6:23, 24)

For believers to have peace would mean for them to enjoy an inner sense of well-being that comes from the assurance that God and Christ deeply love them and will help, strengthen, and sustain them regardless of the circumstances in which they may find themselves. The peace that comes from God and Christ also promotes unity within the community of believers. Being coupled with faith, love may be understood to be an expression of faith or complete trust in God and Christ. As their gift to the community of believers, love would continue to flourish among all. Believers would have genuine concern and care for one another, impartially responding to everyone’s needs. Whereas those to whom Paul wrote had faith, God and Christ would continue to aid them in progressively strengthening their faith. (6:23)

The gracious “favour” or the unmerited kindness that God and Christ grant to believers includes their aid and guidance. Loving Jesus Christ in incorruptness may mean loving him with an undying or never-ending love, or with a genuine and unwavering love. (6:24; see the Notes section.)

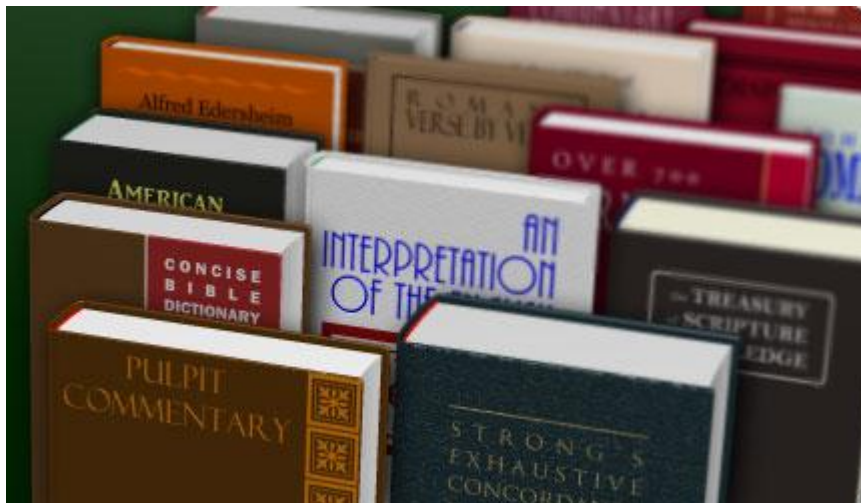
Notes:

In verse 12, extant manuscripts read either “our wrestling” or “your wrestling.”

Fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and a number of other manuscripts end verse 19 with “mystery,” omitting “of the evangel.”

Many manuscripts conclude verse 24 with “Amen.”

A subscription in a number of manuscripts indicates that the letter was sent from Rome.



**Your examination on Ephesians,
Testing yourself while meditating on God’s Word.**

The book of Ephesians is the tenth book of the New Testament. This epistle to the Ephesians was written in Rome, The letter would then be to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus anywhere. The doctrine of the Epistle confirms this view and it contains the highest church truth, but has nothing about church order. The Church here is the true Church, “His body,” not the local church, as in Philippians, and Corinthians. This Epistle can be divided into three parts: 1) The believer’s standing in Grace. 2) The walk and service of the believer. 3) The walk and warfare of the Spirit-filled believer. The author of this book is Paul. Listed below are questions on the book of Ephesians. These questions can be used freely for Sunday school or bible study to help all young Christians study

the scriptures. My prayers are with you always and may God bless you in your studies.

Ephesians Chapter 1

- 1) Who wrote the book of Ephesians? (Ephesians 1:1)
- 2) To whom is this letter addressed? (Ephesians 1:1)
- 3) According to the wonderful doxology of verse three, what has been given to every true Christian? (Ephesians 1:3)
- 4) Why have we been chosen in Christ? (Ephesians 1:4)
- 5) How far back does this plan of perfecting a peculiar people unto Himself go? (Ephesians 1:4)
- 6) Unto what are believers predestinated (“checked off before hand”)? (Ephesians 1:5)
- 7) When one is marked off before hand, what makes him acceptable to God? (Ephesians 1:6)
- 8) What is the price that gives us entrance into Heaven? (Ephesians 1:7)
- 9) What does the believer experience when he is saved? (Ephesians 1:7)
- 10) What attributes of God are illuminated by His Grace? (Ephesians 1:8)
- 11) The divine plan of redemption looks forward to what occasion? (Ephesians 1:10)
- 12) How should the knowledge of such an inheritance cause us to live? (Ephesians 1:12)
- 13) What happens when one really hears the gospel and believes it? (Ephesians 1:13)
- 14) The Holy Spirit is what part of our inheritance? (Ephesians 1:14)
- 15) In what way did Paul continue to remember the saints at Ephesians? (Ephesians 1:16)
- 16) What was the first thing that Paul prayed the saints might come to discern? (Ephesians 1:17)
- 17) What was the second thing that Paul wanted us to understand? (Ephesians 1:18)
- 18) Can you list the third thing that Paul desired for the converts? (Ephesians 1:19)

19) When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, where does He sit at in Heaven? (Ephesians 1:20)

20) When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, what was He exalted over in Heaven? (Ephesians 1:21-23)

Ephesians Chapter 2

1) When one is spiritual dead, to what spirit is his mind most susceptible? (Ephesians 2:2)

2) Since they do not have the new nature, what nature do they have? (Ephesians 2:3)

3) What are their lives predominantly controlled by? (Ephesians 2:3)

4) What must this experience be attributed to? (Ephesians 2:5)

5) As to position, what place does every Son of God occupy? (Ephesians 2:6)

6) As we look into the future eternity, what do we learn as to why God saved us? (Ephesians 2:7)

7) How long will God display before the universe what He accomplished through the gift of His Son? (Ephesians 2:7)

8) Of what do we constantly need to be reminded regarding our Salvation? (Ephesians 2:9-10)

9) What new and living way had been opened for all who would receive it, after Israel also had rejected our Saviour? (Ephesians 2:13)

10) What has been broken down as a result of Christ's redemptive work? (Ephesians 2:14)

11) The cross has what effect upon believing Jews and Gentiles? (Ephesians 2:16)

12) What two classes is Christ's peace offered to? (Ephesians 2:17)

13) Can you state the position now of the believing Jews and Gentiles? (Ephesians 2:19)

14) What is the purpose of the cementing together of true believers by the Holy Spirit? (Ephesians 2:22)

Ephesians Chapter 3

1) What three words does this chapter open with? (Ephesians 3:1)

- 2) How does Paul refer to his commission? (Ephesians 3:2)
- 3) How did Paul come to understand this mystery? (Ephesians 3:3)
- 4) How is this “mystery” now defined? (Ephesians 3:6)
- 5) Who also shared in this knowledge and of this mystery? (Ephesians 3:5)
- 6) What was the marvel to Paul that he should be called to preach to the Gentiles? (Ephesians 3:8)
- 7) What was God’s purpose in the mystery? (Ephesians 3:10)
- 8) Where is the family of God now located geographically? (Ephesians 3:15)
- 9) Can you state Paul’s first petition for the Christian? (Ephesians 3:16)
- 10) What was Paul’s next petition in verse seventeen? (Ephesians 3:17)
- 11) What two things did Paul desire in regard to the Christian’s love? (Ephesians 3:17)
- 12) What was Paul’s next petition in verse eighteen? (Ephesians 3:18)
- 13) Concerning what does the apostle now pray that we might have an “experiential knowledge,” even though the thing itself passes comprehension? (Ephesians 3:19)
- 14) Can you state the last petition in your own words? (Ephesians 3:19)
- 15) Who should we give glory to throughout all ages in this verse? (Ephesians 3:21)

Ephesians Chapter 4

- 1) What is the key thought of the practical section of the epistle? (Ephesians 4:1)
- 2) How will the realization of the loftiness of our calling immediately itself in the life? (Ephesians 4:2)
- 3) Can you state one of the primary duties of every Christian? (Ephesians 4:3)
- 4) Who is the author of unity in this verse? (Ephesians 4:3)
- 5) What is the doctrinal basis for this unity of the Spirit? (Ephesians 4:4-6)
- 6) When our Lord ascended to Heaven, what two special signs of His deity were manifested? (Ephesians 4:8)
- 7) When Jesus Christ ascended, whom did He lead in this verse? (Ephesians 4:8)
- 8) Which direction did the Spirit of Jesus go when it went into the paradise section of the realm of departed Spirits (Hades)? (Ephesians 4:9)

- 9) What did Christ do next after demonstrating to these saved spirits in paradise that His atoning sacrifice had at last been made? (Ephesians 4:10)
- 10) The Holy Spirit gives enablement to believers to make them effective servants. What were Christ's gifts to His Church? (Ephesians 4:11)
- 11) Can you describe the nature of the work assigned to these persons? (Ephesians 4:12)
- 12) When we begin to become "full grown" in Christ, what will we supposedly leave behind? (Ephesians 4:13-14)
- 13) What happens to those who are in love with the truth of GOD'S Word? (Ephesians 4:15)
- 14) How can a person effectively contend for the truth? (Ephesians 4:15)
- 15) If the body is to develop properly, what must every part contribute? (Ephesians 4:16)
- 16) In what should a Christian differ from people of the world? (Ephesians 4:17)
- 17) What is naturally expected of unregenerated people? (Ephesians 4:18)
- 18) When people have no capacity for moral or spiritual feeling, to what do they usually give themselves? (Ephesians 4:19)
- 19) What more can a believer do than "learn of Christ"? (Ephesians 4:20)
- 20) What should the wife do for the Lord in this verse? (Ephesians 4:22)
- 21) What should a Christian always be careful to do? (Ephesians 4:25)
- 22) If the devil gains control of us, where does the fault lie? (Ephesians 4:27)
- 23) If we have need of anything, how are we supposed to get it? (Ephesians 4:28)
- 24) What should never pass the lips of a Christian? (Ephesians 4:29)
- 25) If one is truly born of the Spirit, unto what time is his salvation secure? (Ephesians 4:30)
- 26) When occasions of difference occur between us as Christians, what should we ever remember? (Ephesians 4:32)

Ephesians Chapter 5

- 1) What does Paul say that we should be followers of whom in verse one? (Ephesians 5:1)
- 2) In what special respect is the believer expected to show conformity of life with that of God? (Ephesians 5:2)

- 3) Can you list three sins that are not to be named among Christians? (Ephesians 5:3)
- 4) Can you list other things which a Christian should not do? (Ephesians 5:4)
- 5) Who can definitely be considered as outside the Kingdom of Jesus Christ? (Ephesians 5:5)
- 6) What is said of those who are born again? (Ephesians 5:8)
- 7) What is the fruit of the Spirit contrasted with? (Ephesians 5:9)
- 8) What happens when one who is walking in the light is among sinful men? (Ephesians 5:13)
- 9) If men want their lives to count against the darkness of this world, what must they do? (Ephesians 5:14)
- 10) Why is it sinful for a Christians to fool away their time? (Ephesians 5:16)
- 11) What should take up all the Christian's time? (Ephesians 5:17)
- 12) While drunken people often sing their worldly songs, what does the Holy Spirit cause believers to do? (Ephesians 5:19-20)
- 13) What will always be an outstanding characteristic of those who are filled with the Spirit? (Ephesians 5:20)
- 14) Unto whose husbands are wives to be submissive to? (Ephesians 5:22)
- 15) The headship of the man in the family is patterned after that of Christ. In what sense is the husband the head of the woman? (Ephesians 5:23)
- 16) How is the husband to treat his wife? (Ephesians 5:25-28)
- 17) What tremendous obligation is laid upon the husband? (Ephesians 5:25)
- 18) What was He seeking to do for His Church? (Ephesians 5:26)
- 19) Why does the Church, as a body, need cleansing? (Ephesians 5:27)
- 20) How is a man to love his wife? (Ephesians 5:28)
- 21) What does this imply as to a man's actions toward his wife? (Ephesians 5:29)
- 22) In speaking of the relationship of husband and wife, what other relationship did the apostles have in mind? (Ephesians 5:32)

Ephesians Chapter 6

- 1) What is one decree of God for the well-being of the family and society? (Ephesians 6:1)

- 2) In subservience to whom are parents to exert authority in the family? (Ephesians 6:1)
- 3) Can you state the first commandment with a promise attached? (Ephesians 6:2)
- 4) What is the promise in verse three of the book of Ephesians? (Ephesians 6:3)
- 5) What is the father's duty in this verse? (Ephesians 6:4)
- 6) How is the father to bring up his children? (Ephesians 6:4)
- 7) How could even the duties of a slave be sanctified? (Ephesians 6:5)
- 8) What did the apostle think about a Christian working hard just when the employer is looking? (Ephesians 6:6)
- 9) What is the way to serve even the hardest employer with good will? (Ephesians 6:7)
- 10) Under what obligation does God put the employer? (Ephesians 6:9)
- 11) What should every employer bear in mind? (Ephesians 6:9)
- 12) In facing evil powers, what must take the place of natural wisdom and courage? (Ephesians 6:10)
- 13) What must every Christian have to be victorious? (Ephesians 6:11)
- 14) Can you state the eminent peril of every believer? (Ephesians 6:12)
- 15) Who will provide this armour in verse eleven? (Ephesians 6:11)
- 16) Why is a whole armour needed in this verse? (Ephesians 6:13)
- 17) What must be done in addition to "withstanding" in this evil day? (Ephesians 6:13)
- 18) Can you name two parts of the armour that are given? (Ephesians 6:14)
- 19) What relationship is there between the girdle and Christ? (Ephesians 6:14)
- 20) What is the Christian's breastplate made of? (Ephesians 6:14)
- 21) What does the Christian need to give him firm spiritual footing? (Ephesians 6:15)
- 22) What does the shield represent? (Ephesians 6:16)
- 23) By faith, what is he able to do? (Ephesians 6:16)
- 24) Which is the great offensive weapon? (Ephesians 6:17)
- 25) At what special time may this praying be directed to the throne of God? (Ephesians 6:18)

Letter of Paul to the Philippians

Caesarea Philippi

Situated 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee and at the base of Mt. Hermon, Caesarea Philippi is the location of one of the largest springs feeding the Jordan River. This abundant water supply has made the area very fertile and attractive for religious worship. Numerous temples were built at this city in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Biblical History

Apparently known as Baal Hermon and Baal Gad in the Old Testament period, this site later was named Panias after the Greek god Pan who was worshiped here.

There is no record of Jesus entering the city, but the great confession and the transfiguration both occurred in the vicinity of the city (Matt 16:13), then known as Caesarea Philippi.

Biblical Background



Philippians is the most personal of all the epistles of Paul that were not written to individuals. In the four pages that it occupies in an ordinary-size Bible there are no less than one hundred uses of the first person pronoun. Paul was not talking about himself in any boastful spirit, nor was he engaged in defence of his personal ministry, as in II

Corinthians. The Philippian church had been intensely loyal to him, and he felt that he could speak to them freely of his tribulations and spiritual ambitions. The letter was written when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, and probably near the close of his imprisonment, about A.D. 62, when he was expecting to be released and again to visit the Philippian believers.

Practically a decade had passed since Paul, Silas, and Luke had first entered Philippi. From the beginning people had responded to his message. This church included many women, possibly friends of Lydia, who had laboured with him in the gospel (Phil. 4:3). Some of them, like Syntyche and Euodia, did not always agree among themselves (4:2). At the outset of his ministry in Macedonia the church had supported him, but as his travels had taken him farther afield, they had not done very much for him. The news of the disaster in Jerusalem and his consequent imprisonment in Rome had revived their sympathetic interest (4:10-14), and they had again made a contribution to his need. Epaphroditus, their messenger, had brought to Paul their gifts, and had been taken seriously ill. Paul counted his recovery an answer to prayer (2:25-27), and was sending him back to Philippi with the letter that he wrote (2:28-29). He stated that Epaphroditus had risked his life to bring the gifts, though the nature of the danger was not revealed. Perhaps he incurred disease through his travels and contacts; perhaps he laid himself open to suspicion by communicating with a man who was a political prisoner. The date of Philippians is uncertain, but it seems most reasonable to believe that it was written toward the close of Paul's two years in Rome. It is thought that it may have been earlier than the Asian epistles, because its language has greater affinity with that of the Travel Epistles than with that of the others.⁶ Language affinity is a very tenuous argument, since an author may change his style and vocabulary not only with the advance of his years but also with the needs of the situation for which he was writing. While it is true, as some scholars point out, that Philippians does resemble Romans more in its vocabulary and general style than it does Ephesians or Colossians, it was intended for a church that was more European than Asian and that was not affected by the mysticism and legalism that plagued Colossae. Several other factors enter into the background. Some time must be allowed for the news of Paul's arrival in Rome to reach Philippi, and for the church there to send Epaphroditus to him with the gift. Paul's reputation among the praetorian guard (1:13) and the penetration of the gospel among the members of Caesar's household (4:22) required an interval of time. The two factions among the preachers, those that envied and disliked Paul and those that stood with him (1:15-16), did not develop overnight. Furthermore, his view of his trial shows that he was uncertain of the outcome and that while he was resigned to whatever might happen, he appeared confident that he would be released for further service (1:23-26; 2:17, 24).⁷ No particular schism or heresy within the Philippian church itself seems to have called for disciplinary action. The references to the Judaisers in 3:2 picture them as a potential rather than as a present danger; and while Paul's language is vehement, his main purpose is not so much to refute their error as to arouse the Philippians to walk worthily of their heavenly citizenship (3:17-21).

Contents

This letter or epistle is of profound interest on account of certain marks in it, which connects the truth presented with a state of things much akin to that of the present day. The testimony is not viewed as opposed by the Jewish leaders, as in the beginning of the Acts, nor in conflict with Judaizing influences, as at Antioch; but as in contract with the world power (Rome), which was holding Paul, the vessel of it, in bondage.

Two topics predominate in the text of Philippians. One is *the gospel*, which Paul mentions nine times. He speaks of "the fellowship in the gospel" (1:5, Greek text), the "confirmation of the gospel" (1:7), "the progress of the gospel" (1:12), "the defence of the gospel" (1:16), "worthy of the gospel" (1:27), "striving for the faith of the gospel" (1:27), "service in the gospel" (2:22, Greek text), "labor in the gospel" (4:3), "the beginning of the gospel" (4:15). Paul used the term as denoting a body of faith, a message, and the sphere of activity bounded by preaching. No definition of the gospel is given in Philippians, but the heart of the gospel is contained in two phrases that give respectively the historical and the personal aspects: he became "obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (2:8), and "having a righteousness . . . which is through faith in Christ" (3:9). The former is the good news that Christ died for men; the latter assures men that they can possess his righteousness before God. These are the two aspects of the gospel.

The second topic in Philippians that Paul stressed is joy. His outlook in Rome certainly was unpleasant, since his enemies were seeking to undermine his work, and sudden execution was a possible outcome of the trial. Philippians is anything but pessimistic. Paul rejoiced in every remembrance of the Philippians (1:3) because Christ was preached, whether sincerely or hypocritically (1:18), in the growth of humility in his followers (2:2), in his personal sacrifice for Christ (2:17), and in the gifts and goodwill of his friends (4:10). All through the epistle the brilliant joy of faith is contrasted with the sombre background of untoward circumstance and impending disaster.

Estimation

Philippians is a note of thanks for favours received and an expression of Paul's personal Christian life. The two outstanding passages in this epistle, 2:5-11 and 3:2-15, express respectively the supreme obedience of Christ to the will of God and the supreme passion of his servant, Paul, to achieve the goal for which Christ had called him. The former passage was not written primarily as an essay

in Christology, but was given incidentally to illustrate the nature of humility to which Paul was exhorting the Philippians. The very fact that Paul took its truth for granted in using it as an illustration confirms the theological truth that it contains. People take for granted what they believe in common; they argue when differences arise. ' Much ink has been spilled over the meaning of the phrase "emptied himself" (2:7). To what extent did Christ relinquish the prerogatives of deity when he came among men? The Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily divested himself of visible glory in order to take on himself the garment of humanity and in order to meet the penalty of human sin on human ground, but he did not cease to be God. Along with Colossians 1, Hebrews 1 and 2, and John 1, this is one of the outstanding passages relating to the doctrine of the incarnation.

The other passage, Philippians 3, provides an insight into the driving motive in the life of Paul. His amazing devotion and unflagging zeal place him among the great leaders of history who have devoted their lives to a cause in which they believed utterly. To him, however, all of life was summed up in Christ. To "gain" him, to "know" him, to "be found" in him, to attain the goal set in him engaged all of Paul's attention. Philippians depicts a totalitarian life in Christ.

After the Pauline Imprisonment, what happened?

The outcome of the period of imprisonment is not difficult to assess, even though there may be some questions as to whether Paul was released or not. In spite of his confinement at Caesarea and at Rome, Paul's ministry was not ended. Through his assistants and friends, who are mentioned in the salutations of his epistles, he maintained constant communication with the churches. The enforced retirement provided more time for prayer and contemplation, out of which came the priceless revelation of the Prison Epistles. His appeal to Caesar brought Christianity directly to the attention of the Roman government and compelled the civil authorities to pass judgment on its legality. If it was to be allowed as a *religio heao*, a permitted cult, the persecution of it would be illegal, and its security would be assured. If, on the other hand, it was adjudged to be a *religio illicita*, a forbidden cult, then the ensuing persecution would only advertise it and offer an opportunity for a demonstration of its power. In the decade of the Gentile mission from A.D. 46 to 56, and in the four years of Paul's imprisonment, the church came out from under the banner of Judaism and formed its own ranks as an independent movement. It was now ready for even greater advances in missionary expansion.

Detailed Outline

INTRODUCTION (1:1-11)

1. Salutation (1-2)
2. Thanksgiving and prayer (3-11)

I. THE SITUATION IN ROME (1:12-26)

A. PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT AND OPPOSITION (1:12-18)

1. Imprisonment has actually created opportunities to spread the gospel (1:12-14)
2. Even opposition has provided opportunity for Christ to be preached (1:15-18)

B. PAUL'S EXPECTATION OF DELIVERANCE (1:19-26)

1. By their prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit, he knows all will turn out well for his salvation (1:19-20)
2. Whether he lives or dies, it will be a blessing (1:21-23)
3. Knowing their need of him at the present, he is confident of coming to them once again (1:24-26)

II. EXHORTATION TO BEHAVIOR WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL (1:27-2:18)

A. STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT (1:27-30)

1. Strive together for the faith of the gospel (1:27)
2. Do not be terrified by your adversaries (1:28-30)

B. BE OF ONE MIND BY FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (2:1-11)

1. Make Paul's joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love (2:1-2)
2. In humility, look out for the interests of others (2:3-4)
3. Follow the example of Christ's humility (2:5-11)

C. SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD (2:12-18)

1. By working out their own salvation, for it is God who is at work in them (2:12-13)
2. As children of God, blameless and harmless (2:14-16)
3. Consider Paul's imprisonment as a reason to rejoice (2:17-18)

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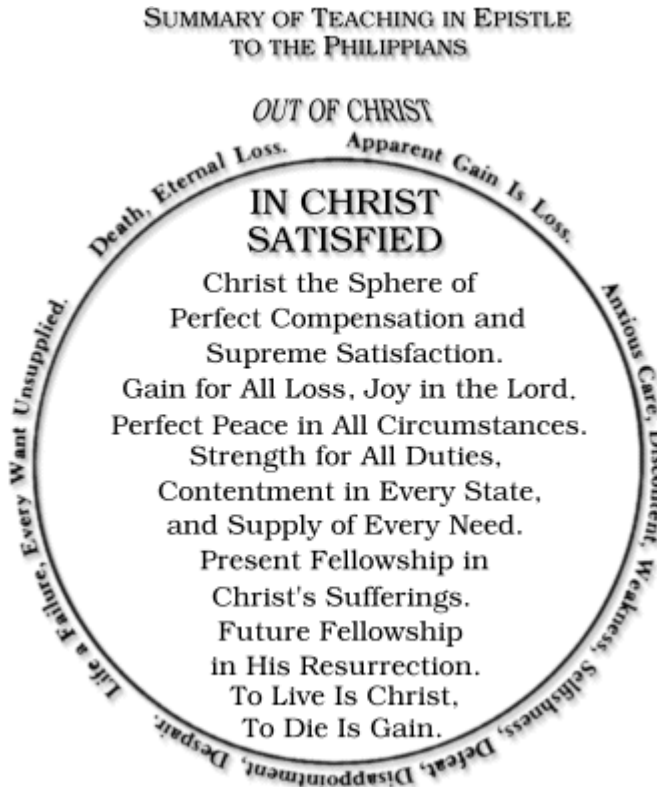
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Contents Generalities

About 50 CE, Paul and his companions, including Silas, Timothy, and Luke, arrived in Philippi. While in Troas, the apostle saw a night vision in which a man of Macedonia pleaded, "Come to Macedonia to help us." Based on the vision, Paul concluded that it was God's will for the evangel about Christ to be proclaimed in Macedonia, and he and his associates set sail from Troas. After making a straight run for the island of Samothrace in the Aegean Sea, the ship arrived at the seaport of Neapolis the next day. Paul and his companions traveled overland for about ten miles over a rocky ridge and then into a plain to

Philippi, a Roman colony. There does not appear to have been a large Jewish population in the city, as Paul and his companions headed for the river on the Sabbath day, thinking that they might find a place where Jews convened for prayer. They did locate a group of women who had assembled for worship,

including Lydia, a seller of purple (either purple dye or purple cloth or garments). Lydia responded in faith to the glad tidings about Jesus Christ, was baptized along with her household, and extended an invitation to the group to stay at her home, making her offer of hospitality in such a way that it could not be refused. (Acts 16:7-15)

Later a problem arose with a slave girl whom the populace regarded as having a “spirit of python.” According to Greek mythology, the god Apollo killed python, the serpent guarding the Delphic oracle. The association of python with the oracle apparently is the basis for the expression “spirit of python” as designating a spirit of divination. When seeing Paul and his companions as they made their way to the place of prayer, the slave girl would shout, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are proclaiming the way of salvation to you.” As this continued for many days, Paul became annoyed and, in the name of Jesus, caused her to lose her powers of prediction. Her owners became furious, as they had profited handsomely from her divination. They seized Paul and Silas, dragged them before the magistrates or the chief officials of Philippi, and made serious false charges against them. Paul and Silas were beaten on their bare skin with rods and then imprisoned. Ordered to guard them securely, the jailer put them in the inner prison and confined their feet in stocks. (Acts 16:16-24)

During the night, a strong earthquake opened the prison doors and released the prisoners from their bonds. Fearing that they had escaped and that he would be executed for having failed in his duty to guard them, the jailer was at the point of committing suicide with his sword. Seeing this, Paul shouted, “Do not harm yourself, for all of us are here.” The jailer’s question about what he needed to do to be saved opened the opportunity for him and his household to hear the good news about the Son of God. That very night he and his household responded in faith and were baptized. He also attended to the wounds that had been inflicted on Paul and Silas from the beating and served them a meal. (Acts 16:25-34)

The next morning the magistrates sent lecturers, lesser officials, with the directive that Paul and Silas be released from prison. As their rights as Roman citizens had been violated and this secret release could have given the wrong impression to the people of Philippi, Paul insisted that the magistrates personally come to the prison and publicly release them. Alarmed that they had trampled on the rights of Roman citizens, the magistrates complied but did request that Paul and Silas leave the city. Before departing, Paul and Silas stopped at the home of Lydia and encouraged the believers who had assembled there. (Acts 16:35-40)

In intervening years, believers in Philippi continued to assist Paul materially. While the apostle was imprisoned, they sent Epaphroditus with funds and to minister to his needs. Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians during the period of

his confinement. The letter itself does not say where the apostle was then imprisoned. In his letter, Paul mentions the “praetorium” (1:13), which can designate the imperial guard in the city of Rome. The designation “praetorium” can, however, also mean the official government house or the governor’s residence. Based on Paul’s mentioning his fighting beasts in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32) and the extreme danger he faced in the province of Asia (2 Corinthians 1:8), some commentators have suggested Ephesus as the place of imprisonment and understand persons of Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22) to be minor Roman officials, including slaves or freedmen in their service. It does, however, seem less interpretative to regard Rome as the place of Paul’s imprisonment, taking “pratorium” to mean the imperial guard and the “household of Caesar” to refer to members of Caesar’s household in Rome, including slaves. Moreover, the book of Acts makes no reference to an extended period of imprisonment in Ephesus but concludes with Paul’s confinement in Rome. According to the book of Acts, Caesarea was the only other place where the apostle was imprisoned for an extended period, and some have concluded that his letter to the Philippians was written from there. (Acts 24:27) This view requires interpreting “praetorium” and “Caesar’s household” in the same way as when Ephesus is thought to have been the place of imprisonment.

Commentary on Philippians

Philippians 1: 1-30

1: 1-11 Paul the pastor’s joy in Christ

Verses 1-2 Paul’s pastoral salutation

Paul identified himself as the writer of this letter to the Philippians. He mentioned Timothy as his fellow servant of Jesus Christ, for Timothy had earlier laboured with him in Philippi. As slaves of Jesus Christ, Paul and Timothy had the inestimable honour of being in his service, advancing his interests. (1:1)

Paul addressed his letter to all the “holy ones in Christ Jesus who are in Phillipi.” As members of Christ’s body, believers were at one with him. Having been forgiven of their sins, they were holy or pure from God’s standpoint as they sought to be guided by his spirit to live upright lives. Among the “holy ones” were “overseers” or superintendents, men who were entrusted with the responsibility to look after the spiritual interests of fellow believers, and “servants” who cared for the needy. (1:1; compare Acts 6:1-4; 20:28.)

As in other letters, Paul included the prayerful expression, “Favour to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” “Favour,” unmerited kindness, or grace would include all the aid and guidance the Father and his Son would provide. For believers to enjoy the peace of which God and Christ are the source would mean their being in possession of inner tranquillity, knowing that as beloved children of God and brothers of Christ they would be sustained and strengthened in times of trial and distress. (1:2)

3-11 His pastoral joy

Whenever Paul remembered the Philippian believers, he was moved to thank God, always doing so for them individually in every supplication of his. His gratitude was prompted by what the Most High had done for them and how they had responded to the evangel. The apostle’s intense prayers included every one of the believers in Philippi, reflecting his personal care and concern for each of them. Joy accompanied his supplication or fervent prayer, as his diligent labors among the Philippians had produced good results. From the first day until the very time Paul wrote this letter, the Philippians had been sharers in the advancement of the evangel. (1:3-5) Immediately, after her baptism, Lydia insisted on having Paul and his companions stay in her home and framed the invitation in a manner they could not refuse. “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord,” she said, “come into my house and stay.” (Acts 16:15) This genuine offer of hospitality would have enabled Paul and his companions to devote themselves fully to sharing the glad tidings about Christ and focusing on the spiritual needs of fellow believers. On other occasions, the Philippians sent aid to him while he was proclaiming the evangel elsewhere and, upon receiving news about his imprisonment, sent Epaphroditus to minister to his needs. (2:25; 4:14-16) At the time Paul wrote his letter, Epaphroditus was still with him.

The apostle had confidence that the Father, who had begun the “good work” in the Philippians, would complete it. In the “day of Jesus Christ,” they would stand as approved, fully tested servants of the Most High and possessors of genuine faith. Although Paul did not specifically identify God as the one who began the good work, other passages do indicate this. Jesus said that only those whom the Father would draw could come to him. (John 6:44) God is the one who, by means of his spirit, imparts a newness of life to believers and makes continual growth possible. (John 1:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7) Paul had no doubt that, in the “day of Jesus Christ,” or at the time of his return in glory, God’s work in the Philippians would be revealed as having been completed. (1:6)

He felt that it was only right for him to think so positively about all of the Philippian believers because he had them in his “heart” or was affectionately attached to them because of the commendable spirit they had manifested. As a spirit-filled apostle, Paul recognized God’s working within the Philippian believers and knew them to be beloved fellow children of God. That is why he deeply loved them. In his bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the evangel, they were sharers with him in the favour, unmerited kindness, or grace of God. (1:7) Paul’s reference to divine favour may here specifically relate to his having been called to be an apostle and entrusted with the evangel or the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. In coming to his aid during the time of his confinement, the Philippian believers proved themselves to be sharers in his bonds, sympathizing with him as if bound with him. (Compare Hebrews 10:34; 13:3.) They were also participants in his defence and confirmation of the evangel, as their aid demonstrated their support of and cooperation with Paul in his defending the message about Jesus Christ against false accusations and confirming its validity. (Compare Paul’s defense before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa [Acts 24:10-21; 25:8; 26:1-29]. Note that a major part of his defense consisted in presenting proof respecting the truth of the evangel.)

Paul called upon God as his witness respecting the longing he had to see all of the Philippian believers “in the affection [literally, bowels, apparently from the standpoint of the effect deep emotions have and thus denoting tender feelings or affection] of Christ Jesus.” The apostle’s love for the Philippians was like that of God’s Son, and this deep love for them prompted his yearning to see them. (1:8) Paul prayed that the love of the Philippians might abound more and more “in knowledge and all perception.” This appears to mean that their ever-increasing love would be guided by knowledge and perception, making it possible for them to direct their love in the best or noblest way. With a fullness of knowledge as a stabilizing factor, their love would then not blindly attach itself to anyone and anything. Discernment would enable them to avoid wasting or misdirecting their love. (1:9)

In possession of knowledge and discernment, they would be able to perceive differences, recognizing who should rightly be the objects of their love and to what degree. Love for God and Christ would take priority over any other love. An ever-expanding, rightly motivated, properly directed love would result in their being pure and blameless at Christ’s return in glory or in his “day.” They would be filled with the “fruit of righteousness that [is] through Jesus Christ for God’s glory and praise.” The “fruit of righteousness” could include laudable conduct, aid rendered to those in need, and participation in advancing the evangel. Through oneness with Christ, they would be able to bear this desirable

fruit (John 15:5, 8), and God would be glorified or exalted and praised on the basis of their commendable words and deeds. (1:10, 11)

1:12-30 Paul the prisoner's joy in Christ

Verses 12-20 His confident joy in tribulations

The Philippian believers, his brothers in Christ, may have thought that Paul's imprisonment interfered with the spread of the message about God's Son. The apostle wanted them to know that this was not the case. Instead of his confinement presenting an obstacle, it had contributed to the advancement of the evangel. "In the whole "praetorium" and to all the rest," it had been manifest or come to be well known that his bonds were "in Christ" or that he was suffering because of being Christ's disciple. It seems likely that the "praetorium" designates the praetorian or imperial guard in Rome. According to Acts 28:16, a soldier guarded Paul. As different soldiers would have guard duty, they would have learned about the reason for the apostle's confinement, and word would have spread throughout the praetorian guard about him. Talk was not limited to the guard. "All the rest," or others besides the Roman soldiers, learned about Paul and the reason for his confinement. (1:12, 13)

As far as most of the brothers or fellow believers were concerned, Paul's bonds or his faithful endurance of confinement for Christ's name had greatly emboldened them to speak God's word or the message about Christ fearlessly. (See the Notes section regarding the words "in [the] Lord.") Not all, however, were rightly motivated. Certain ones were envious of Paul and manifested a spirit of rivalry. They may have wanted to exalt themselves and advance their own cause. (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:4, 5; Galatians 6:12, 13.) Others, however, proclaimed Christ out of "good will," or they were kindly disposed toward the apostle. They wanted to see the cause of Christ advanced despite Paul's being in confinement. Their preaching of Christ was rightly motivated, "out of love." Their objective was pure, wanting others to accept Christ as Lord and to be reconciled to the Father through him. They recognized that Paul was in prison for a noble reason—"for the defense of the evangel." This could mean that the confinement provided him with an opportunity to defend the evangel against false charges (1:7; compare Acts 9:15; 23:11; 27:24) or that he found himself in bonds because he had defended (and continued to defend) the glad tidings about Jesus Christ. (1:14-16)

The others were preaching Christ with a contentious or quarrelsome spirit. According to another significance of the Greek word *eritheia*, selfishness or selfish ambition motivated them. They lacked purity or sincerity. Mean-spirited,

they thought to cause distress for Paul while he found himself in bonds. In seeking to undermine and demean Paul's labours, they would have revealed themselves to be persons intent on adding to the burden he was under while in confinement. (1:17)

The apostle, however, did not let wrongly motivated ones discourage him. Whether individuals preached for a pretext or mere appearances or they did so in truth or sincerity, Christ was still being made known. The fact that the message about Christ was being proclaimed brought joy to Paul, and he determined to continue rejoicing. The apostle recognized that the wrongly motivated messenger did not change the right message, and those responding to the message in faith would not, at the same time, have to adopt the spirit of the wrongly motivated messenger. (1:18)

If the introductory phrase ("for I know that this") is to be linked with the previous verse, the meaning would be as follows: Because he maintained his joy that Christ was being made known, coupled with the fervent prayers of the Philippians and the "support of the spirit of Jesus Christ," Paul knew or had the assurance of his "salvation" or "deliverance." The apostle thus acknowledged the importance of his fellow believers' supplications for him. He also recognized the need for the support or assistance of the "spirit of Jesus Christ." From the standpoint of Christ's role in making the spirit available to believers, the reference may be to the Holy Spirit. (Compare Acts 2:33.) There is also the possibility that "the spirit of Jesus Christ" denotes the spirit or disposition God's Son manifested when undergoing suffering. (Compare 1 Peter 2:21, 22.) In this case, "salvation" or "deliverance" could mean that Paul expected to be set free or that his experience would contribute to his final salvation. In the Septuagint, the identical words are found in Job 13:16 (*toutó moi apobésetai eis soterían* [this to turn out for salvation to me], with "salvation" (*sotería*) having the sense of "deliverance." In view of Paul's mentioning the possibility of death as an outcome in the next verse, however, he may have been referring to his final salvation. On the other hand, he was convinced that it was needful for him to continue living to aid the Philippian believers and so may have meant that he would be set free. (1:19; see the Notes section for additional comments.)

The apostle eagerly expected and hoped that he would not experience shame in any way but that he would then, as always, boldly or courageously, whether by his life or by his death, magnify Christ in his body. Paul desired to bring honor to God's Son, courageously making known the message about him and exalting him by the way he used his body. Whether Paul continued to live or had his life cut short, he was chiefly concerned about how his conduct reflected on God's

Son. Paul earnestly desired that his life would continue to manifest a Christlike spirit and that his facing death would be with a Christlike spirit, revealing to others the inestimable value of being a disciple of God's beloved Son. (1:20)

Verses 21-30 The secret of Paul

Apart from Christ, Paul did not regard himself as truly living. He directed all his efforts to please the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who had died for him. Christ proved to be Paul's very life. For the apostle, death would have been gain, as a death in faithfulness would assure him of being united with his Lord whom he deeply loved. (1:21)

If he were to continue living, there would be fruit from his labour. His life would serve a good purpose, and he would use it in advancing Christ's cause. Still, he did not know whether to choose life or the gain that dying as a faithful servant of Christ would bring. He felt torn between whether it would be more desirable to continue living or to complete his earthly sojourn. What he really wanted is to depart and to be with Christ, enjoying fellowship with him in the sinless state. Being with Christ would be far better than continuing to live in the flesh. (1:22, 23)

For the sake of his beloved fellow believers in Philippi, however, Paul realized that his continuing to live would be better and, in fact, more essential, as he would still be in a position to assist them spiritually in a personal way. Convinced that he still needed to serve the Philippians, he firmly believed that he would not be executed but would continue to enjoy personal association with all of them and aid them in their spiritual progress. His remaining alive would also contribute to their "joy of faith." This would be a joy stemming from faith. The Philippians had faith in the help of the Lord Jesus Christ and that of his Father, and they persevered in prayer for Paul, earnestly desiring that he be set free. As the Son of God, the head of the body of believers, would be involved in effecting the apostle's release, their faith in him would result in joy. Therefore, "in Christ Jesus," by reason of what he had done for Paul, making it possible for him to be with them again, the Philippians would be jubilant with unbounded joy. (1:24-26)

At this point in his letter, the apostle focused specifically on the Philippians, admonishing them to maintain conduct worthy of the evangel of Christ and thus of Christ himself. The Greek verb *politeúomai* for "conduct" has the literal sense of acting as a citizen. As possessors of heavenly citizenship, their conduct should harmonize with their dignified standing and reflect favourably on the glad tidings about Christ. Their conduct should be a credit to his name. By

maintaining laudable conduct, the Philippians would retain a good reputation. So, whether with them personally or away from them, Paul would hear that they were “standing firm in one spirit, striving with one soul for the faith of the evangel.” The expression “standing firm in one spirit” may denote being solidly fixed as a body of believers in intent, purpose, or the motivating or energizing force at work within them. As with one soul (“with one mind,” according to numerous translations), a complete unity or oneness, they should be “striving side by side” for the faith to which the evangel gave rise or for which it was responsible. Unitedly, the Philippians would be advancing and upholding the cause of Christ. (1:27)

Their doing so would not be without intense opposition from persons persisting in unbelief. Therefore, Paul encouraged them not to allow their opponents to frighten or intimidate them in any way. Opposers might heap abuse upon them, violently attack them, or in other ways cause them to suffer. By continuing to persecute the Philippian believers, the enemies of Christ gave evidence that they were headed for destruction. If they continued in this course, these opponents could not hope to be spared from divine wrath. (1:28)

At the same time, the persecution opposers launched against them provided proof of salvation for the Philippian believers, and Paul added, “and this [is] from God.” (1:28) The Philippians had endured faithfully under suffering, and they had Christ’s assurance, “the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:13) Their being abused and persecuted for the name of Christ proved that they were friends of God and of his Son. They were no part of the world alienated from God and, therefore, no friends of the world. If they had been friends of the world, they would not have suffered at the hands of those alienated from God and they themselves would have been God’s enemies. Accordingly, the suffering that befell them and their faithful endurance constituted a token from God of their standing as his beloved children, assuring them of salvation. (John 15:18-21; Hebrews 12:3-11; James 4:4)

As believers, the Philippians had not only been favoured to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him. (1:29) To believe in Christ, to come to enjoy the relationship with him and his Father that faith in him makes possible, is an incomparable favour. Throughout the centuries, people have considered it an honour to be in the service of a ruler, a king, or a queen. The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, has far greater authority and dignity than any human ruler or all rulers combined possessed or ever will possess. No greater honour could anyone have than to be in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and to suffer for him, and he considers any suffering his faithful disciples experience as his suffering. (Compare Matthew 25:34-45.)

The “struggle” the Philippian believers were experiencing in the form of opposition and persecution was the same “struggle” Paul had faced in Philippi and which they had witnessed. He (along with Silas) was falsely accused and unjustly beaten and jailed. As the Philippians heard more recently, Paul continued to experience this struggle for advancing the cause of Christ, for he was then in confinement. (1:30)

Notes:

The phrase “in [the] Lord” (1:14) could apply to “brothers” (“brothers in the Lord”). Elsewhere in this letter, however, Paul used the expression “brothers” by itself, and this suggests that “in the Lord” may be linked to the participle that follows (*pepoithótas*, meaning “having confidence”). Translations reflect both ways of understanding the expression “in the Lord.” “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.” (NIV) “Now most of the Lord’s followers have become brave and are fearlessly telling the message.” (CEV) “Most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.” (NRSV) “The majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly.” (NAB) In verse 14, manuscript readings include “speak the word,” “speak the word of the Lord,” and “speak the word of God.”

Translations differ considerably in the way verse 19 is rendered, with some preserving the basic word order of the Greek text and others changing the word order and adding interpretive elements. Numerous translators have chosen to make the reference to “salvation” to mean being set free. The following are examples of various renderings of the concluding part of verse 18 and verse 19: “Indeed I shall continue to rejoice, for I know that this will result in deliverance for me through your prayers and support from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” (NAB) “Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.” (NRSV) “Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.” (NIV) “And I will continue to be happy, because I know that by means of your prayers and the help which comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ I shall be set free.” (GNT, Second Edition) “So I am happy, and I will continue to be happy. Because you are praying for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ is helping me, I know this trouble will bring my freedom.” (NCV) “And I

will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and as the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will all turn out for my deliverance.” (NLT)

Philippians 2:1-30

2:1-11 Exhortation to unity and humility

Verses 1-4 The exhortation

The introductory phrases starting with “if” (*ei*) contain the motivation for the Philippians to complete Paul’s joy. If as a result of their being disciples of God’s Son encouragement in Christ (the kind of encouragement stemming from being at one with Christ as members of his body), consolation prompted by love, “sharing of [the] spirit” (benefiting from the influence of God’s spirit and manifesting its fruit), affection (see 1:8), and compassion exist, then the Philippians should complete Paul’s joy. They would be doing so when being of the “same mind” (the same Christlike disposition), having “the same love” (the self-sacrificing love God’s Son exemplified), being “united of soul” (acting unitedly as one person), and thinking “the one thing” (*tó hén*; other manuscripts read *tó autó* [“the same thing”]), being in agreement, or living in harmony. (2:1, 2)

In their dealings with one another, they were to avoid contentiousness, selfish ambition, or a quarrelsome disposition and vain conceit. They should instead humbly consider others as better than themselves. Such a modest estimation of themselves would enable them to appreciate the good qualities of fellow believers, be willing to serve them, and look out for their interests instead of just focusing on personal concerns. (2:3, 4)

Verses 5-11 The example of Christ

Paul encouraged the Philippians to have the same mind, attitude or disposition of Jesus Christ. (2:5) As the verses (6-11) that follow reveal, the Son of God manifested an exemplary spirit of humility, and this led to his exaltation. In the Greek text, the lines of these verses are rhythmic, suggesting that they may have been part of a Christian hymn. In numerous translations, the words are, in fact, printed in poetic style (a few examples being CEV, NAB, NIV, NRSV).

Before his life on earth, Jesus was in the “form of God” or, in every respect, like his Father—“the radiance of his glory and the imprint of his being.” (Hebrews 1:3) With apparent reference to his being in the “form of God,” the Greek word

isos used in expressing the relation to his Father appears to denote his being exactly like his Father. To this state of being like his Father, the very form of his Father, he did not cling as if it were snatched booty, but he emptied himself of all the glory associated with being in God's form and took a slave's form, becoming a man, "lower than the angels." (Hebrews 2:7) So, instead of continuing to be in the "form of God," he came to be in the "likeness of men." As a man, Jesus humbly submitted to mistreatment, never retaliating and never reviling. He became obedient in an environment where he was subjected to reproach and suffering, and then died a shameful and painful death like the worst kind of criminal. (2:6-8; see the Notes section for additional information.)

Because Jesus humbly gave up being in the form of God, took on the form of a slave as a man, and then obediently submitted himself to the point of suffering a shameful death, God highly exalted him and granted him a name above every name. That highly exalted state embraces his having "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), and the "name above every name" would include his matchless authority as judge, high priest, king, mediator, and savior. As the possessor of "all authority in heaven and on earth," every knee should bow in humble submission to him as their Lord. This includes angels in heaven, humans on earth, and the dead under the ground (whom Christ will resurrect). (2:9-11) The universal recognition to be accorded to the Son of God parallels what is said of the Father in Isaiah 45:23 (Tanakh): "By Myself have I sworn, from My mouth has issued truth, a word that shall not turn back: To Me every knee shall bend, every tongue swear loyalty."

The universal acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord, with every tongue making it, would bring glory or honour to the Father, as he is the one who highly exalted his Son. As Jesus himself said: "The Father judges no one but has granted all judgment to the Son, so that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father. The one who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him." (John 5:22, 23)

2:12-16 Working our salvation

Verses 12-13 The exhortation

Affectionately, Paul referred to the Philippians as "my beloved." As they always had obeyed or been responsive while he was present, he admonished them to obey much more so in his absence and to work out their salvation "with fear and trembling." Emphasizing that their doing so did not depend exclusively on their own efforts, the apostle added, "for God is working in you, [for you] to will and to work for [his] good pleasure." (2:12, 13)

Verses 14-16 The result

The Philippians had always been exemplary in responding to what the message about God's Son required of them. While the apostle labored among them, his words and example would have contributed to their good response. Without his encouraging and motivating presence, the Philippians would have needed to put forth additional personal effort to maintain exemplary obedience to divine direction. They had not as yet attained their final salvation and needed to guard against a spirit of overconfidence. The possibility of not attaining the desired goal of their faith should have contributed to their having a wholesome fear and a terror of what a possible loss could mean. To be diligent and vigilant respecting their salvation required fully cooperating with God in what he was accomplishing within them by means of his spirit. Although justified on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ, they had not been freed from the sinful flesh and could choose to live in harmony with the spirit's direction or to be disobedient, grieving the spirit.

Although effort on their part would be required, the Philippians had the benefit of God's guiding influence. By means of his spirit, he prompted them to "will" or to choose and then to act. The expression "for [his] good pleasure" could either mean that God delighted to work within them as believers to enable them "to will and to work" or that he influenced them to act for his good purpose, to carry out his will, or to please him.

In their personal dealings, the Philippians were to "do all things without murmuring and disputing," preserving peace. The failings of others or the inconveniences and drain on resources resulting from extending hospitality might have given rise to murmuring or complaining. Besides shunning murmuring, the Philippians were to avoid allowing factors that might cause friction to give rise to heated arguments. By remaining free from murmuring and disputing, they would reveal themselves to be "blameless and innocent, unblemished children of God amidst a crooked and perverted generation." Like the angels, who do not rail against others, expressing themselves in abusive terms or downgrading others, God's unblemished earthly children do not speak or act in the hateful manner characteristic of persons who are a part of a "crooked and perverse generation," people alienated from God. (Compare 2 Peter 2:10-12; Jude 8-10.) While living in the "world" or among persons whose words and actions did not merit commendation, the Philippians, by their praiseworthy conduct, were to shine as lights. (2:14, 15)

The Greek term *epécho*, following the expression “word of life,” could mean either “hold fast” or “hold toward.” Paul either admonished the Philippians to adhere closely to the “word of life,” living in harmony therewith,” or to “hold [it] toward” others, offering them the message that would lead to life. By following through on the apostle’s admonition, the Philippians would provide him with a cause for pride in “Christ’s day” or at the time of Christ’s return in glory. They would then be found approved children of God, and Paul’s diligent exertion (running) and toil for them would not have been in vain or useless. (2:16)

2: 17-30 Paul’s example of humble service

Verses 17-18 The joy of such service

Besides his having “run” and “laboured,” Paul was willing and pleased to be poured out as a libation “upon the sacrifice and service of the faith” of the Philippians. As he wrote, he would “rejoice” and rejoice with all of them even if that were to happen and wanted them to rejoice with him. His labouring for the Philippians and others in the advancement of Christ’s cause led to the possibility of his facing a martyr’s death, but this did not fill him with gloom. If it was reserved for him, he would rejoice in thus being completely spent like a libation accompanying the “sacrifice and service” for which the faith of the Philippians was responsible. (2:17, 18) Their “sacrifice and service” would have included aiding the needy and sharing the message about Christ. (Compare Hebrews 13:15, 16.) The Philippians’ faith motivated them to praiseworthy activity, and this gave Paul good reason to rejoice with them. His remaining faithful to the end and thereby bringing honour to God and Christ would have provided the basis for the Philippians to rejoice with him.

Verses 19-30 The service exemplified

Paul hoped to send Timothy to Philippi soon after writing this letter. When speaking of this hope as being “in the Lord,” the apostle indicated that it depended upon the Lord Jesus Christ. With Timothy in Philippi, Paul wanted to be cheered upon receiving news from him concerning them. The apostle had the utmost confidence in Timothy, saying that he had no one of “like soul” (*isópsychos*, “like-souled”), mind, or disposition and who would genuinely be concerned about their welfare. It appears that regarding everyone else he could have sent, Paul said that they all were looking after their own interests, “not those of Christ Jesus.” Possibly they considered the perils involved in travel and the drain on their energies and did not want to undertake the mission, preferring their more comfortable and less demanding circumstances. Theirs was not a

spirit of wholehearted sacrifice in advancing the cause of Christ. They were unwilling to expend themselves fully for fellow believers. Timothy, on the other hand, had already proved or demonstrated to the Philippians the kind of caring person he was, slaving with Paul like a child with a father for the evangel. Like a dependable, trustworthy, industrious son, Timothy had served shoulder to shoulder with Paul in advancing the interests of Christ Jesus. The apostle hoped to send Timothy as soon as he knew for a certainty how matters would turn out for him personally. In view of the limitations his confinement imposed, Paul doubtless depended greatly on Timothy to assist him, doing for him what he was prevented from doing for himself. Therefore, before he would be in a position to send Timothy, he needed to be sure what his personal situation would be. The fact that Paul had such high regard for Timothy and relied on him revealed the depth of his love for the Philippians when wanting to send him to assist them. (2:19-23)

“In the Lord” or in recognition that everything depended on the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul confidently hoped that he himself would soon be freed to undertake the journey to Philippi. This expression of confidence indicates that he felt strongly that he would soon be able to send Timothy. (2:24)

Paul did, however, consider it necessary to send Epaphroditus, whom he called “my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier [committed to the defence of the evangel], but your apostle and servant for my need.” Upon learning about Paul’s imprisonment, the Philippians had sent Epaphroditus with a gift and as a helper for Paul. As one sent, Epaphroditus was an “apostle” or “messenger.” He longed for all of the Philippian believers or, according to other ancient manuscript readings, he longed to see all of them. A major reason for his yearning appears to have been his anxiety or distress from learning that the Philippians had come to know about his having become seriously ill. (2:25, 26) Before he finally recovered, Epaphroditus had been so sick that he almost died. “But,” as Paul wrote, “God had mercy on him, not only on him but also on me, so that I might not have sadness upon sadness.” The apostle regarded the recovery as an expression of God’s compassion both for Epaphroditus and for him. It would have added greatly to Paul’s sorrow had he lost his “brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier,” as he knew Epaphroditus had come into the perilous situation because of having been sent to assist him. (2:27) Paul’s sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi quickly would serve two purposes. The Philippians would rejoice upon seeing their brother again and in good health. Paul himself would be less troubled or anxious, likely because of concern about the anxiety the Philippians may have continued to have about Epaphroditus. (2:28)

Paul encouraged the Philippians to “receive” or welcome Epaphroditus “in the Lord with all joy” and to highly value persons like him, for he had almost died for the “work of the Lord.” Their being reunited with their brother who shared the same relationship of oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ would rightly have been an occasion for joy. When assisting Paul, Epaphroditus had performed the “work of the Lord,” for the Son of God considers such loving aid as being rendered to him. (Compare Matthew 25:34-40.) In place of the Philippian believers who would have wanted to help Paul but were prevented from doing so by distance, Epaphroditus had served, making up fully for what they could not personally do, and had risked his “soul” or life in this loving service. (2:29, 30)

Notes:

In verse 2, the Greek words for the renderings “mind” and “thinking” are forms of the same verb (*phronéo*), basically meaning “thinking.” Paul’s emphasis is on unity. The *Contemporary English Version* interpretively paraphrases the verse: “Now make me completely happy! Live in harmony by showing love for each other. Be united in what you think, as if you were only one person.”

In 2:6, the Greek term *isos*, commonly translated “equal,” conveys the sense of being like or the same as some person or thing. In the parable about the vineyard workers, the twelve-hour labourers complained that the vineyard owner gave the same pay to those who only worked one hour, saying, “You made them equal (*isos*) to us.” (Matthew 20:12) Regarding those testifying falsely against Jesus, Mark’s account (14:56, 59) says that their testimony did not agree or was not the “same” (*isos*).

Jesus did not consider as *harpagmós* being the same as God or like God. The Greek verb form of *harpagmós* (*harpázo*) means “snatch,” “grab,” “seize,” “carry off,” or “drag away.” The noun *harpagmós* could either denote something seized as by robbery or something held onto as if seized. Jesus’ action in not clinging to his being like God to become a man would illustrate his humility more forcefully than would his not resorting to a seizure and becoming a man, and this would appear to be the preferable significance of the passage in Philippians.

Based on the suggested lexical meanings for the word *harpagmós*, translations vary considerably in their renderings. Examples are: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider

it robbery to be equal with God.” (NKJV) “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.” (NAB) “He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.” (GNT, Second Edition) “Although from the beginning He had the nature of God He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped.” (Weymouth) “Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit.” (NCV) “Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.” (HCSB) “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.” (NRSV) “He was in the form of God; yet he laid no claim to equality with God.” (REB)

In verse 30, extant manuscripts variously read, “work of [the] Lord,” “work of Christ,” “work of the Christ,” and “work of God.”

Philippians 3:1-21

3:1-6 Christ the true goal vs. False goals

Verse 1 The true goal in life presented

Paul encouraged his Philippian brothers to “rejoice in the Lord.” This would be a joy resulting from their being at one with the Son of God as their Lord who loved them and continued to be their helper. (3:1)

Although the apostle wrote to the Philippians the same things he likely had mentioned while with them, this did not trouble him. He regarded the reminders as a safeguard for his beloved fellow believers, especially as there were those who were bent on undermining their faith. (3:1)

Verses 2-6 False goals warned against

Paul urged the Philippians to watch out for the “dogs,” “workers of evil,” and the “mutilation.” As a term of contempt, “dogs” would have been descriptive of persons who acted like filthy, ferocious, promiscuous, wild scavenger dogs. “Workers of evil” could include those who were morally corrupt or who through false teaching harmed others. Those whom the apostle linked to “mutilation” apparently insisted on circumcision as being needful for salvation and perverted

the truth of the evangel, which revealed faith in God's Son to be the basis for an approved standing with God. Their wrong view of circumcision made it nothing more than an act of mutilation. (Compare Galatians 5:7-12; 6:12-16.) It may be that Paul referred to the same group of false teachers as "dogs," "workers of evil," and the "mutilation." If so, he applied to them the very term of contempt ("dogs") they used when speaking of uncircumcised persons. (3:2)

Circumcision had significance when it served as a sign of the covenant relationship with God the true Israelite enjoyed. Otherwise, it did not count with the Most High. (Compare Jeremiah 9:24, 25) On the other hand, disciples of God's beloved Son enjoyed an approved relationship with his Father. Therefore, as Paul wrote, "we are of the circumcision" (God's approved people who had been inwardly transformed to reflect the reality of which circumcision was but an outward sign in the flesh). In the case of Christ's disciples, the spirit directs or guides their service to God, their boasting or taking pride is "in Christ Jesus" (being at one with him as their head), and they do not rely on the flesh or any fleshly distinction setting them apart from others. (3:3)

Paul, however, did have a basis for confidence or reliance on the flesh or fleshly distinction and, in fact, much more so than others who thought they could rely on the flesh. He was not a proselyte but had been circumcised on the eighth day (as the law directed). He belonged to the people of Israel and was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. This made him a descendant of the only son of Jacob born in the land of Israel and a member of the tribe that provided Israel's first king, and the only tribe that remained loyal to Judah and the royal line of David. Both his parents were Hebrews, he being a "Hebrew from Hebrews." As to the law, he lived the life of a Pharisee, the "strictest sect" of Judaism. (Acts 26:5) As to zeal for Judaism and the cherished traditions, he persecuted the church or congregation of Christ's disciples, for he blindly considered them to be in opposition to what he valued as a Pharisee. (Compare Acts 26:9-11; Galatians 1:13, 14; 1 Timothy 1:13.) From the standpoint of righteousness associated with the law, Paul lived the life of an exemplary Jew, proving himself to be blameless. (3:4-6)

3:7-9 Christ the one goal in life

Verse 7-8a Counting all lost.

Verse 8b-9 Reckoning the gain

At one time, he had regarded his privileges and distinctions as "gains" and trusted in his own efforts to attain a righteous standing before God. These "gains," however, he came to consider as "loss" because of Christ. Nothing in

which he formerly took pride had brought him closer to Christ but had hindered him from attaining the inestimable honor of belonging to Christ, and that was a great loss. To the apostle, the most precious possession was knowing Christ Jesus his Lord, having an intimate relationship with him. Paul regarded as loss everything that diverted the focus from the superior value of knowing God's Son. To gain Christ, he considered as "refuse" or "garbage" everything he had lost but had once highly valued. Paul ardently desired to be found in Christ, inseparably attached to him as a member of his body, and in possession of the righteousness based on faith in Christ and granted by God on the basis of this faith. He did not want his own righteousness dependent upon observing the law, as he knew that flawless keeping of the law was an impossibility for him as a sinful human. (3:7-9; compare Galatians 2:15, 16.)

3:10-14 Concentration of spiritual purpose

Verses 10-11 The object of concentration

Paul wanted to "know Christ and the power of his resurrection." In this context, the apostle's knowing Christ appears to mean more than just enjoying an approved relationship with him. It involves actually sharing in what the Son of God experienced. The power of Christ's resurrection could signify Paul's experiencing the same kind of resurrection as did Christ Jesus or the working of the same power within him that was involved in Jesus' being raised from the dead. (Compare Ephesians 1:18-20.) Part of his "knowing" Christ would be through "sharing in his sufferings," being submitted to the same kind of sufferings Christ experienced from the world alienated from God. Jesus Christ finished his earthly course in faithfulness to his Father, and Paul wanted his own death to be like Christ's, so that he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. (3:10, 11)

Verses 12-14 The reason for concentration

Paul did not identify what he had not as yet received, but the context shows that he was referring to the object of his faith and hope or to being with Christ and enjoying life in the state of absolute sinlessness. The apostle had not as yet been perfected, as the righteousness he possessed on the basis of faith in Christ had been reckoned or imputed to him. The state of flawlessly reflecting the image of God in attitude, word, and deed would prove to be a future possession. In his defence before Agrippa, Paul indicated that Christ had laid hold of him when on his way to Damascus and stated his purpose for doing so as being to "serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me [or, according to other ancient

manuscripts, the things that you have seen] and to those in which I will appear to you. I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles — to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:16, 17, NRSV) Ultimately, Christ’s taking hold of Paul was for the purpose of his being united with him in glory. (3:12)

In response to Christ’s having taken hold of him, Paul began his “race,” finally to be united with Christ in the heavens. Like a runner, the apostle did not consider himself as having attained the final goal. He did not rely on past privileges and attainments, becoming complacent. Instead of looking to the past, he forgot about what lay behind him and looked ahead to the future, continuing to exert himself with all the strength he could muster and with his eyes focused on the prize. Single-mindedly, he pursued his course for the “prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” God in Christ or through his Son had directed the call to Paul to participate in the heavenly inheritance or all the joys and blessings to be shared in association with his Son. (3:13, 14)

3:15-19 Another appeal for unity

Verses 15-16 The appeal

Verses 15-19 The example

In the case of those who had attained the level of maturity as disciples of God’s Son that he had, the apostle admonished them to be of the same mind about diligently pursuing the prize of the “upward call of God in Christ.” Regarding all who had not as yet come to have this attitude and thought differently in certain respects, the apostle confidently expressed that God would reveal to them the right way of thinking. In the case of all, Paul encouraged them to conduct themselves in harmony with the advancement they had made, not falling short of their individual level of progress. (3:15, 16) He had set an example worthy of imitation and, therefore, could encourage his beloved Philippian brothers to join in imitating him and to take note of others whose walk or conduct corresponded to his. (3:17)

Sadly, not all whom the apostle knew continued to walk or conduct themselves in a divinely approved manner. Many of whom he had often spoken in the past he “now” spoke of accompanied by weeping, for they were walking or conducting themselves as enemies of the very purpose for which Christ had died a shameful death. Christ’s death provided the basis for forgiveness of sins to those who accepted it in faith, a faith that would be evident from their ceasing to live a life of sin. Those whom Paul mentioned with tears, however, disowned the

Son of God through their corrupt way of life. Their end would be destruction or ruin. This would mean losing out on all the joys and blessings associated with being loyal disciples of God's Son. Their god proved to be their "belly" or their corrupt fleshly desire, as they gave in to their craving in full submission as if it were a god. They should have been ashamed of themselves and their course of life, but they gloried in or boasted about their wayward way as if it had been honorable. Their minds were focused on earthly things or the activities of persons alienated from God and to whom his "upward call" was completely foreign and unknown. (3:18, 19)

3: 20-21 Christ the believer's expectation

Verse 20a Our heavenly citizenship

Verses 20b-21 The privileges of our citizenship

For disciples of God's Son, it would be inconsistent with their hope to focus primarily on things that are earthly, perishable, or transitory. As possessors of heavenly citizenship, their home is a heavenly one, and it is from the heavens that they eagerly await the glorious return of their Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will refashion the "body of lowliness" or the corruptible, mortal body marred by sin to be like his glorious, sinless, incorruptible, immortal body. Believers can be confident of this, for the Son of God has the power to subject everything to himself. (3:20, 21)

Notes:

In 3:3, the oldest extant Greek manuscript (P46) reads "in spirit serve," whereas later manuscripts read either "in [the] spirit of God serve" or "in [the] spirit serve God."

In 3:8, the Greek word (*skybalon*) for "refuse" or "garbage" is plural. It is a crass expression that can apply to manure, excrement, or any type of refuse or garbage.

In 3:11, the Greek word for resurrection is *exanástasis*, not *anástasis*, as in the previous verse. Possibly the prefix is to be understood as indicating that the individual is raised up "out" from among the dead and thus is brought to a fullness of life, whereas the word without the prefix focuses on being raised up from lying prone in death.

In 3:17, the change from first person singular ("me") to first person plural ("us") may indicate that Paul was including his loyal companions. There is also a possibility that he simply switched to the editorial first person plural pronoun.

Philippians 4:1-23

4:1-5 Standing fast in Christ's sufficiency

Verse 1 The reason for the injunction

When referring to his Philippian brothers as “beloved and longed for, my joy and crown,” Paul revealed his deep appreciation and affection for them. He yearned to see them. As a “crown,” they were a real credit to him in their response to the evangel, and they had also brought him much joy in the love they had shown for God, for his Son, and for him and his companions, and in their exemplary appreciation of the message about Jesus Christ. In view of their heavenly citizenship and the glory that awaited them, he urged his beloved brothers to stand firm in the Lord, maintaining their faith in him without wavering. (4:1)

Verses 2-5 The result of the injunction

It appears that a rift had occurred between Euodia and Syntyche, and Paul admonished both of them to be of the same mind in the Lord. As women with faith in God's beloved Son, they needed to be at peace with one another as members of the same spiritual family. For this purpose, the apostle enlisted the aid of a Philippian brother whom he called his “genuine yokemate” or his loyal fellow worker. Possibly Syzygos (“yokemate”) was the brother's actual name. The apostle asked this brother to be of assistance to Euodia and Syntyche in resolving their misunderstanding. Paul highly valued them, for they, Clement, and other fellow workers had struggled with him for the evangel, which could have included efforts to advance and defend the message about God's Son. Therefore, with confidence, Paul referred to their names as being in the “book of life.” (4:2, 3)

Earlier, Paul had urged the Philippians to rejoice (3:1) and again admonished them always to do so. Possibly his having mentioned the book of life reminded him of all the blessings believers enjoy and in which they will ultimately share, and this may have prompted him to encourage the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord or to express the joy having its source in being at one with him. (4:4)

As his admonition to Euodia and Syntyche revealed, Paul desired that a spirit of mutual agreement continue to exist among believers. In their relationship with unbelievers, he urged them to maintain a disposition that would promote peace. He admonished the Philippians to let their tolerant, forbearing, or yielding spirit

be known to “all men” or be recognized by all with whom they had dealings. The Greek word *epieikés*, conveying the sense of being “tolerant” or “yielding,” is expressive of the disposition that does not insist on unyielding conformity to rules, regulations, or customs but that is willing to make allowances, taking circumstances into consideration. The realization that “the Lord is near” serves to promote this commendable spirit, as he is the one who knows all the factors and can render a flawless judgment. (4:5)

4: 6-9 The secret of God’s peace

Verses 6-7 The prescription of God’s peace

Paul admonished the Philippians to avoid giving in to anxiety or worry but to commit all their concerns to God. In answer to their prayers, supplications or fervent appeals, and expressions of thanksgiving, the “peace of God” would come to be their cherished possession. This peace is an inner calm or tranquillity from being fully aware of God’s love and care. It is a peace that surpasses understanding, as it transcends any kind of peace, tranquillity, or calmness that comes from another source, one that does not rest on a truly dependable basis. The “peace of God” guards the mind from becoming preoccupied and distracted with needless and unproductive worries. It also protects the “heart” or deep inner self from unsettling feelings of foreboding and alarm, as the deep inner self is calmed from an abiding awareness of God’s love, care, and assistance. This safeguarding of mind and heart, however, is “in Christ Jesus” and so is only experienced by those who are united to him as their Lord. (4:6, 7)

Verses 8-9 The prescription for maintaining God’s peace

Possibly, the opening words of verse 8, *to loipón* (literally, “the rest,” or “finally,” “furthermore,” or “in addition to”) are to be linked to the previously expressed thoughts about the “peace of God.” To maintain this peace, the qualities Paul wanted the Philippians to consider or think about would need to guide their thoughts, words, and actions. *Alethés* applies to what is “true,” “honest,” “genuine,” “upright,” or “sincere.” *Semnós* describes whatever is “honourable,” “noble,” “serious,” “dignified,” “venerable,” or “deserving of respect or reverence.” *Díkais* means “righteous,” “right,” “upright,” “just,” “fair,” or “equitable.” *Hagnós* designates whatever is “pure,” “immaculate,” “chaste,” or “holy.” *Prospilés* describes things that are “pleasing,” “lovely,” “amiable,” or “lovable,” or things that induce affection. *Eúphemos* literally means that which sounds good and so denotes what is “appealing,” “praiseworthy,” or “commendable.” *Areté* is “virtue” or “moral excellence.” *Épainos* is descriptive of whatever is deserving of “praise,” “commendation,”

“approval,” or “approbation.” It appears that the true, noble, just, chaste, and lovable things are then included in the expression “if any virtue or if any praise.” Whatever is true, noble, just, chaste, and lovable can be described as virtuous or morally excellent, and whenever such qualities are manifest they deserve praise or commendation.

From Paul they had learned and accepted the message about Jesus Christ, and the apostle had been exemplary in speech and action. His words could be relied upon and his conduct proved to be praiseworthy. Therefore, Paul could admonish the Philippians to practice what they had been taught and accepted and what they had heard and seen in his case. Their doing so would assure having the God of peace with them, guiding and sustaining them in whatever circumstances they might face. (4:9)

4: 10-23 Paul’s testimony of God’s peace

Verses 10-14 His contentment in the Lord

The apostle rejoiced greatly in the Lord or on account of what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for the Philippians, with their resultant loving and caring response reflected in their coming to Paul’s aid. It made the apostle very happy that the Philippians had once again revived their thinking about him or showed their concern for him. This did not mean they had forgotten about Paul, but they lacked the opportunity to provide aid in a personal way. Although deeply appreciating their kindness and generosity, he was concerned not to suggest being intent on receiving gifts. The apostle made it clear that he did not speak from the standpoint of being in need. He had learned to be “self-sufficient” in whatever circumstances had come his way. Paul knew what it meant to be “low,” basically having nothing or being in humble circumstances, and what it meant to have an abundance. In all things and every circumstance, he had learned the secret of how to be content. Whether he was fully satisfied or experienced hunger, whether he had an abundance or suffered lack, Paul enjoyed a state of self-sufficiency or contentment. He did not, however, attribute this to his own self-reliance but gave the credit to the one who imparted power to him. Based on expressions in his other letters, Paul evidently meant that the Lord Jesus Christ had strengthened him. (2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:17) Nevertheless, he appreciatively acknowledged that the Philippians, through their kindly assistance, had done well or acted commendably in becoming sharers in his tribulation or suffering. (4:10-14)

Verses 15-23 His gratitude for benefit received

The expression the “beginning of the evangel” appears to mean when Paul first began to proclaim the message about Christ in Europe. After he left Macedonia, where Philippi was located, the Philippians knew that as a congregation of believers they were unique in providing assistance to him. No other congregation reciprocated as did the Philippian believers. While Paul served in Thessalonica, they sent something “once and twice” (an expression apparently meaning “more than once”) for his need. In commending them, however, the apostle did not mean to suggest that he was “seeking the gift.” He saw in their generosity the desirable fruit accruing to their account, and this spiritual benefit to them is what he really was seeking. (4:15-17)

With the generous gifts the Philippians had sent through Epaphroditus, Paul considered himself as having everything, abounding and being filled. The apostle referred to what he had received from them as a delightful fragrance, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. Confidently, Paul looked to God to superabundantly fill every need the Philippians might have. The Most High would do so in Christ Jesus or through his Son and “according to his riches in glory” or his magnificent riches that far transcend anything that humans can even imagine, for God owns everything. Having focused his thoughts on what God would do for the Philippians, the apostle was moved to direct a prayerful expression of praise to God, the Father of believers. (4:18-20)

Paul requested that his greetings be given to all the holy ones in Christ Jesus or all the Philippians who, because of being at one with God’s Son, enjoyed a pure standing as members of God’s people. The brothers or all his beloved associates then with him sent their greetings. All others of God’s people or “holy ones” from the area, especially those from the “household of Caesar,” also did so. Members of Caesar’s household could have included slaves, freedmen, or even minor officials. Their being specifically singled out as wanting their greetings conveyed may have been of particular interest to the Philippian believers. Philippi was a Roman colony where retired soldiers and government servants resided, and some of the Philippian believers may have known the individuals from Caesar’s household. (4:21, 22)

Paul concluded his letter with the prayerful words, “The favour of the Lord Jesus Christ [be] with your spirit.” (4:23) The spirit of the Philippians revealed them to be a group of loving, caring, and generous believers, and upon this noble disposition of an inner life transformed by God’s spirit Paul desired the favour of the Lord Jesus Christ to remain. (4:23)

Questionnaire on Philippians

Every book of the Bible is important because each one is inspired by God. Certain books draw us close to them time and again because of their strong encouragement, powerful teaching and practical wisdom. The Apostle Paul provided us with great examples of the joy we will experience when we serve in the name of Jesus.

Generalities

Chapter One

Chapter 1 is where the Apostle Paul tells of his longing to see the believers in Philippi and explains how his sufferings have resulted in glory for God Almighty.

Chapter Two

In Chapter 2 we learn that we're united in humility and learn of the great model that the humbled and exalted Christ provided us and that we are to shine as lights.

Chapter Three

In Chapter 3 of the Book of Philippians Paul tells us about how he is sold out to Christ and how he presses on to reach his goal and then encourages us to follow in his footsteps as we follow Christ.

Chapter Four

In Chapter 4 of the Book of Philippians we're encouraged to be unified in joyful prayer and to meditate on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy.

Meditation on Philippians

Epistle to the Philippians reveals the timeless message that *true* joy is to be found only in a dynamic personal relationship with Jesus Christ and in the assurance that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is able to work good in all situations as through, in, and by Christ, we can joyously proclaim alongside Paul, that "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Joy only comes through a foundation built on and in Christ. "Joy," wrote the great

theologian Augustine, “is a bird; let it fly in the open heavens, and let its music be heard of all men. Sinners are attracted to Jesus by the joy of Christians.”

Listen to the cries of the world: people are desperate to be rescued. To the businessperson, to live is wealth; to the scholar, to live is knowledge; to the soldier, to live is victory or honour; to the young man, to live is pleasure; to the man desirous of recognition, to live is fame; to the middle aged man, to live is youthful beauty. We could go on and on, listening to the voices of the world and their quiet desperation leads to hopelessness. But ultimately, for followers of Christ, only one voice is heard—To me to live is not wealth, nor fortune, nor knowledge, nor fame, nor glory, but Christ. Christ first, last, midst all, and always Christ.

- Christ is the *giver of life*—“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10.10).
- Christ is *life itself*—“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2.20).
- Christ is the *model of my life*—“Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5.48).
- Christ is the *aim of my life*—“I desire to make known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pe 1.16).
- Christ is the *reward of my life*—“Thanks be to God for His indescribable!” (2 Cor 9.15).

What Paul writes to the Philippians—that is, what he once said—it is also written (or spoken) in the present tense, here and now. The truth then that Paul exposes is the reality that his thanksgiving arises from theological conviction: he and his readers must think of one another on the basis not of their contingent worldly situation but of their eternal standing before God and in Christ.

From this standpoint, the various interpersonal relationships of which the letter speaks, with their accompanying anxieties, tensions, or reservations, are comprehended within the peace of God that passes understanding.

This is crucial to remember because we are created to be in relationship and must not forget what Scripture continually seeks to remind us of—that thanksgiving is the acknowledgement that, whatever else may be true, the follower of Christ is who he is because he is *in* Christ. All human action takes place against the background of the great *drama* of the movement in God and from God towards humanity.

The letter to the Philippians, in the end, cannot be reduced to a single, foundational statement. Its beginning, middle and end cannot be sharply differentiated from one another, for everything is simultaneously beginning, middle and end. A merely formal and static order would be a denial of the *movement* of the living God and the living human beings set in motion by it.

We are God's beloved, called to LIVE CHRIST, BE IN CHRIST, GROW FROM CHRIST'S POWER, and TO LIVE OUT THE FULLNESS OF PEACE AND LIFE FROM CHRIST! Amen Jesus!

Advanced Questions

What are the Pauline epistles?

What are the prison epistles?

What should we learn from the life of Paul?

What does it mean 'to live is Christ' (Philippians 1:21)?

What does it mean and when will it happen that every knee shall bow?

What does it mean to work out salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12)?

Who was Epaphroditus in the Bible?

Can I really do all things through Christ?

How can I experience joy in my Christian life?

What is the peace that passes all understanding?

Inductive Questions

1. Approve What Is Excellent (Philippians 1:1-11) Explain
2. In Every Way Christ Is Proclaimed (Philippians 1:12-21) Explain
3. For Me to Live Is Christ (Philippians 1:18-30) Explain
4. He Emptied Himself: Humility and Exaltation (Philippians 2:1-11) Explain
5. God Is at Work in You (Philippians 2:12-18) Explain

6. Christian Character: Timothy and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:19-30) Explain
7. That I May Know Him (Philippians 3:1-11) Explain
8. Pressing Toward the Goal (Philippians 3:12-4:1) Explain
9. Rejoice in the Lord Always (Philippians 4:2-9) Explain
10. A Partnership in Giving and Receiving (Philippians 4:10-23) Explain

Letter to the Colossians

The Supreme Glory of Christ's Person



Paul had never visited Colossae when he composed his epistle to the church here, but he does imply that Epaphras founded the church, along with those at Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 1:7-8; 4:12-13). This was probably during Paul's third missionary journey, when he preached in Ephesus for two years, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10 KJV).

Colossae was a city of south-western Phrygia in the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor) in what is now Turkey. The city was situated on the Lycus River not far from where that river joined with the Meander River. Colossae was located about 125 miles east of Ephesus near the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. These two cities were 10 and 13 miles respectively northwest of Colossae, which was the oldest of the three cities. Originally Colossae lay on the

trade route from west to east. This location made it an important city. But then the main road was changed and moved north near Hierapolis and Laodicea. These two cities then grew in importance and surpassed Colossae in wealth and prestige. Colossae declined to a relatively small, unimportant village. It retained its fame for its wool and its municipal independence under the Romans.

Background

Colossians and Ephesians are twin epistles; in fact, their resemblance is so great that some who doubted the Pauline authorship of Ephesians have averred that it is only a copy of Colossians with additions. The town of Colosse was as we know located in the hinterland of Asia on a rocky ridge overlooking the valley of the Lycus River, not far from the cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. During the period of the Persian Wars in the fifth century B. C. , Colosse had been a town of considerable importance, but as Hierapolis and Laodicea grew, its commerce declined. It had been especially noted for the glossy black wool that was grown by the shepherds in the adjoining hill country. In Paul's day it was decadent, although still a good-sized city.

Paul himself had probably not visited Colosse or its neighbouring cities, since he says that they had "not seen [his] face in the flesh" (Col. 2:1). It must have been evangelized during his stay in Asia, perhaps by Timothy and Epaphras (1:7) who went from place to place while Paul preached in Ephesus.

The heresy of Colossae that evoked this letter was a local development that arose because of the peculiar situation of the city. Colossae was on the trade route from the East, along which oriental religions as well as oriental merchandise were transported to Rome. The Colossians were Phrygian Gentiles (1:27) whose religious antecedents were highly emotional and mystical. They were seeking to attain the fullness of God, and where teachers came among them with a philosophy that promised a mystic knowledge of God, they were entranced by it. Among its tenets were voluntary humiliation, probably by ascetic practices (2:18, 20-21), the worship of angels, who may have been reputed intermediaries between God and man (2:18), abstinence from certain foods and drinks, and the observance of feasts and ceremonial days (2:16). It is quite likely that these teachings also included a strain of Jewish legalism, brought in from contacts with the Jewish population of Asia Minor. Paul's references to ceremonialism (2:11) and to the fact that the ceremonies and feasts were a shadow of things to come (2:17) sound more like Judaism than heathenism. The Colossian heresy, then, was of the same order as the Galatians

heresy, except that it centred about the person of Christ rather than about salvation by grace versus salvation by works.

Many interpreters of Colossians regard this heresy as a syncretism (i. e. , a mixing or blending) of Jewish and oriental elements. There appears to be ascetic veneration of the "elemental spirits of the universe" (2:8 RSV) along with a Jewish ritualism concerned with various matters of food and ceremony (2:16). This is likely not a formal Gnostic system, such as became known in the late first and early second centuries, but may have contained elements found in that later complex of thought.

The answer to this heresy lay not in extended argument, but in a positive presentation of the person of Christ. Paul pointed out that all philosophies, spiritual powers, ceremonial observances, and restrictions were secondary to the pre-eminence of Christ.

Content

Outstanding in Colossians is the passage from 1:14 to 22, which sets forth Paul's Christology. Curiously enough, it was not a separate treatise, but part of a prayer with which Paul opened the paragraph in 1:9. Beginning with a relative clause explanatory of the phrase "the Son of his love" (1:13), it continued with a description of Christ in terms that could be applied only to deity, summarized finally in the astounding statement that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"- (2:9). In creation, in redemption, in the church, and in personal life Christ must be preeminent.

Redemption is prominent in the teaching of Colossians. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins (1:14). Through the blood of his cross we are reconciled to God (1:20, 22). The bond written in ordinances that was against us has been abolished in the cross (2:14). The subjective application of death and resurrection is also taught in Colossians: "If ye died with Christ . . . why . . . do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? . . . If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (2:20; 3:1).

Colossians was written as an antidote to a blasé intellectualism that prated of mysteries, secret knowledge, and wisdom, while discounting Christ by a false philosophy. Paul shows that in Christ God is perfectly pictured (1:15), that in him all the fullness of deity resides (1:19), and that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3). Moreover, the ethical demands of the Christian life are closely linked with its intellectual standards. "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (3:2). The practical section of the book that follows this injunction (3:5-4:6) is connected to

it by a "therefore," which establishes the relation of conscious effort between knowledge and behaviour. Paul was no purveyor of idle theories. For him the gospel had clear ethical consequences.

Outline

The personal glory of Christ as head of the body, the church, is specially brought out. The hope before the saints is in heaven : they are viewed as risen, but not seated in the heavenlies in Christ, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The life of the new man is dwelt on, but the Holy Spirit is only once mentioned: 'your love in the Spirit.'

Chapter 1

After the salutation, and thanking God for what Paul had *heard* of their faith (for apparently he had not been to Colossae) he at once prays for them that they might be filled with the full knowledge of God's will ; might walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in all things ; and might be strengthened with all power. Verses 9-11. Then he gives thanks for what God *had done* for them, which is true of all Christians. Verses 12-14. The glories of Christ follow : as man, and as the Creator-God : He is head of the body, the church. Verses 15-19. All fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and by Him; to reconcile all things to Himself (or itself), having made peace through the blood of His cross : the saints were already reconciled if they continue in the faith (which would prove their reality). Verses 20-24. Paul had a double ministry : in the gospel, ver. 23 ; and in the church, ver. 25. His sufferings in his body filled up the (non-atoning) sufferings of Christ ; and the revelation he had, concerning the mystery of the church, filled up the word of God (not as to time, for some portions were added afterwards, but as to the circle of subjects). Paul laboured to present every man perfect (that is, full grown) in Christ.

Chapter II

Paul was deeply anxious for the welfare of the saints, that they might be rooted, built up, and established in the faith, lest they should be led astray by the philosophy of the world and the deceitful teaching of men, which would in no way minister Christ to them. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,' and they were complete in Him nothing must be allowed to come between them. In Christ they had the reality of the things signified in the ordinances of circumcision and baptism. They had died and were risen with Christ. The saints were warned in verses 16, 17 against being entangled with the Jewish things; and with the occult philosophy of the fleshly mind of the Gentile : all of which was in contrast and in opposition to holding Christ

as Head. Having died with Christ they were set free from all the ordinances of men. This has been called the *negative* side.

Chapter III.

This gives the *positive* side, being risen with Christ.' Their mind was to be set on things above, as heavenly people walking on earth. When the Lord appeared they would appear with Him in glory. Christ was their life, and in consistency therewith they were to mortify put to death—all that sprang from the motions of the flesh. A catalogue of things is given which were to be practically *put off*, because the old man had been *put off* with his deeds. Then having *put on* the new man, a catalogue of things is given which in consistency therewith were to be *put on* (the display of Christ, who is in each one '): above all things was *love*. Peace was to *rule* their hearts, and the word of Christ to *dwell* in them ; helping one another with their songs. Exhortations follow to wives, husbands, children, fathers, and servants. Practical Christianity should be manifest in every station of life.

Chapter IV.

Exhortations to masters, and then to all. Tychicus and Onesimus would declare to them the affairs of Paul. Salutations follow. The epistle was to be read to the church of the Laodiceans, and some epistle coming to them from Laodicea was to be read at Colossae. (Perhaps the epistle to the Ephesians was being circulated from church to church.) A message to Archippus : the salutation by the hand of Paul, and a request to remember his bonds close the epistle with " Grace be with you. Amen."

Summary of Outline

1: 1-14	Paul's interest in the Colossians
1: 15-29	The glory of Christ's person and work
2: 1-23	Christ the answer to doctrinal errors
3: 1-4: 18	Union with Christ the basis of Christian living

Commentary

Colossians 1: 1-291:1-8

The Apostolic Greeting

Verses 1 - 3 Paul's pastoral solicitude

Paul identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The expression “through the will of God” could indicate that his call to be an apostle was from God and independent of any human agency (Galatians 1:1) or that his receiving the apostleship was an expression of God's unmerited favour. (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10; Ephesians 3:7, 8) Paul associated his young fellow worker Timothy with himself and referred to him as “the brother.” (1:1) In this case, the definite article “the” may be significant, revealing the apostle's high regard for his loyal partner as “the brother” without equal. (Compare Philippians 2:19-22.)

Although Paul had not personally proclaimed the message about God's Son in Colossae, he was deeply concerned about the believers in that city. He addressed them as “holy ones and believing brothers in Christ.” As “holy ones,” they were God's people enjoying a pure standing before the heavenly Father on the basis of their faith in his Son. The adjective *pistós* may mean either “believing” or “faithful.” Paul could have been expressing his confidence in the Colossians as “faithful” or trustworthy brothers or acknowledging them as fellow sons of God having faith. As “brothers in Christ,” they were at one with him as members of his body. Paul included his customary prayerful expression, “Favour to you and peace from God our Father.” The designation “favour,” “grace,” or “unmerited kindness” would include all the help and guidance God gives to his beloved children, and “peace” would be the inner calmness and tranquillity stemming from the assurance of having his abiding love and care.

The Greek verb for “thank” is first person plural. Paul appears to be using the editorial “we thank,” and the present tense indicates that his expressions of thanks to God are continuing. When praying concerning the Colossians, Paul always thanked “God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” thereby giving God all the credit for the faith and love they had. Upon coming to know concerning their faith in Christ Jesus and the love they had for all the holy ones, Paul began praying for them. Their love must have been revealed in their coming to the aid of those in need. (Compare 1 John 3:14-18; 4:11, 12, 20, 21.) The hope laid up for them in the heavens provided strong motivation for them to maintain their faith in Christ and to express their love for all the holy ones. They had heard

about this hope when the “word” or message of truth, the evangel or glad tidings about God’s Son, was initially proclaimed to them. (1:3)

Verses 4-8 Reasons for Paul’s interest

In being laid up for them in the heavens, the realization of the hope had been secured for them and embraced sharing in all the rewards and blessings that would result from their being united with the Lord Jesus Christ upon his return in glory.

The evangel, which had come to the Colossians, bore fruit in “all the world.” Wherever the message about God’s Son reached people, many of them did respond in faith and so the evangel grew or flourished. This also happened among the recipients of Paul’s letter “from the day” or from the time they heard the glad tidings and came to know the “favour of God in truth” or came to understand what the unmerited kindness of God truly is. This would have included forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith in Christ and becoming members of the beloved family of God’s children, with all the blessings and privileges associated therewith. (1:6)

The Colossians had learned about the favour or grace of God from Ephaphras, whom Paul acknowledged as “our beloved fellow slave” and a “faithful servant of Christ.” Manuscripts vary in referring to Epaphras as a servant of Christ “in your behalf” or “in our behalf.” If “our” is the original reading, this would mean that Epaphras served in Paul’s place, ministering to the Colossians as the apostle would have laboured if he had been in the city. Epaphras had also told Paul about the love of the Colossian believers “in spirit.” The expression “love in spirit” could mean the love that God’s spirit produces or the spiritual love for Paul as their brother whom they had not seen personally. (1:7, 8)

1:9-14

The Apostolic Prayer

Verses 9 – 11 The petitions made

From the time Paul had received news about the Colossian believers, he did not cease praying for them, requesting that they might be filled with the knowledge of God’s will “in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension.” The apostle desired that they be in possession of a full, rounded-out knowledge of God’s will, possessing the wisdom to conduct themselves accordingly and the spiritual comprehension to discern the divine will for them. This would enable them to “walk” or to conduct themselves worthily of the Lord, being fully pleasing to

him, proving themselves to be fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. (1:9, 10)

Although “Lord” could denote either God or Christ, the earlier mention of “our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3) provides a basis for concluding that the reference is to God’s Son. To walk worthily of Jesus Christ would also signify maintaining conduct that would please his Father. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:12, where Paul mentions walking worthily of God.) Every “good work” would include providing aid to those in need, maintaining praiseworthy conduct in dealing with others, and sharing the message about God’s Son. For believers to grow in the knowledge of God would require continual development in their relationship with their heavenly Father as his beloved children.

Paul prayed for the Colossians to be in possession of the fullness of divine power, “being made strong in all strength according to the might of [God’s] glory.” The expression “might of God’s glory” is indicative of a source of power beyond comprehension and of incomparable greatness. It is a glorious or magnificent might. In the letter to the Ephesians (1:19-21), this power is revealed as having been at work in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his Father’s right hand in an exalted state far above all existing and future ruling authorities. Strengthened with such incomparable might, the Colossians would be equipped “for all endurance and patience, with joy.” (1:11) When faced with trials and suffering, they would be able to bear up without giving way to bitter complaining or wanting to retaliate. They would be able to maintain an inner joy, knowing that they pleased God and Christ, suffered for the right reason, were being refined through their trials, and had the assurance of sharing with Christ in his glory. (Compare Matthew 5:10-12; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 2:20, 21; 4:12-16; see the Notes section for additional comments on verse 11.)

Verses 12-14 The name in which the petition is made

The Colossians had strong reason for thanking the Father, as he made them fit (or, according to the reading of a number of manuscripts, “called” them) to share in the “inheritance of the holy ones in the light.” As “holy ones” or God’s cleansed people, they would be sharers in the “inheritance” promised to all who belong to him or to all who are his children. That inheritance is “in the light,” being markedly separate from the kind of defilement and impurity associated with darkness. “From the authority of darkness,” the Father rescued all who responded in faith to the message about his Son and transferred them “into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” In Christ or in a state of oneness with him, believers are redeemed, delivered from servitude to sin, and forgiven of their transgressions. (1:12-14)

1:15-17

Christ's deity and creatorship

Verse 15a Christ's deity

Verses 15b – 17 Christ's creatorship

Having ceased to be a part of the world of mankind alienated from God, they no longer find themselves in the realm of darkness under the authority of Satan. (Compare Acts 26:18.) They have been taken out of that realm of darkness and transferred into the realm of light, the realm where Jesus Christ is their Lord and King. As persons forgiven of their sins and approved children of God, they enjoy the benefits of being in the royal realm of God's beloved Son, which benefits include his loving care, concern, aid, and guidance. Upon Christ's return in glory, they would enter into the fullness of the royal inheritance.

The Son is the "image of the invisible God," in every way being exactly like his Father or his Father's very imprint. Therefore, seeing the Son is just like seeing the Father. (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3) The Son is the "firstborn of all creation, because in him all things were created." The expression "in him" could signify that the Father, as the Author of creation, committed to his Son the work of creation, constituting the Son the direct cause of the creation. This means that all creation owes its existence to the Son. Accordingly, in relation to the creation, he occupies the preeminent position, possessing the foremost status associated with being the firstborn (including heirship and lordship). The creation includes "all things in the heavens and upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." As all creation owes its existence to the Son, any power or authority associated with the creation is also owing to him and inferior to his. The expression "through him" identifies the Son as the agent of creation, whereas "for him" or, literally, "into him," appears to reveal him as the one in whom all creation finds its purpose. (1:15, 16) The German *Gute Nachricht Bibel* makes this sense of "into him" explicit (*alles findet in ihm sein letztes Ziel* ["everything finds its final goal in him"]). "He is the goal of creation," All things were created for Him. He is the sustainer of creation. "In Him all things hold together."

In his creative role, the Son is before all things and is also the one on whom creation depends. (1:17) The Greek word *synístemi*, which appears to denote "hold together," may be understood to describe the Son as the one who unifies

and sustains all creation, holding everything in its respective place. (Compare Hebrews 1:3.)

1: 18-19

Christ's headship over the church

Verse 18a He is Head of the church

Verses 18b – 19 He is the beginning of the new creation

The “church” or the entire community of believers is Christ’s body. Of this body, he is the head, for all members function under his guidance and direction. He is the “beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he might become first in all things.” The designation “beginning,” as the context suggests, points to the Son as the one through whom all things had their start. In being the “firstborn from the dead,” he stands in a unique relationship to the dead. He was the first to rise with a glorified body and thus also came to occupy the position of “firstborn,” for he is the Lord of the dead through whom they are restored to life. (Romans 14:9) Accordingly, in creating all things and in being the first to rise in an immortal, incorruptible body, God’s Son is preeminent or “first in all things.” (1:18)

It pleased God to have “all the fullness” dwell in his Son. He is the exact representation of his Father, with nothing lacking of the divine glory, wisdom, compassion, purity, justice, and love. (1:19)

1:20-23

Christ's work of reconciliation

Verses 20-21 The beginning of reconciliation

Sin alienates humans from God. The Father therefore took the initiative in providing the basis for a reconciliation, sending his Son to the earth. The blood of Christ (literally, “the blood of his cross”) effected peace, as all who embraced his sacrifice for them gained forgiveness of sins. (1:20) Through Christ, those in a state of alienation became reconciled to his Father. The things upon the earth and the things in the heavens thus ceased to be at enmity and were brought into a harmonious condition of peace. (Compare Ephesians 1:10.) The sinner is reconciled (absolutely changed) by divine power from a state of hostility and aversion toward God to loving trust (Romans 5:10; 11:15 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Verses 22-23 The purpose of reconciliation

Formerly, before responding in faith to the message about Christ, the Colossians had been in a state of alienation from and at enmity with God. In thought and deed, they acted contrary to his ways. But in Christ's "body of flesh through death," they had been reconciled. Christ's sacrificial death in his body of flesh provided the basis for reconciliation with God. As to the objective of this reconciliation, Paul continued, "to present you holy and unblemished and blameless before him." Instead of continuing in a defiled and alienated condition before God, they, in faith, had accepted Christ's sacrifice for them and had been made holy or pure as persons cleansed by Christ's precious blood and reckoned as having no blemish or blame attached to them. (1:21, 22) To maintain their approved state, the Colossians needed to remain or persevere in the faith, solidly grounded and firmly fixed, not being moved away "from the hope of the evangel" which they heard. The evangel or message about God's Son included the promise of sharing with him in his glory at his return. Hope in the fulfilment of this promise served as strong encouragement for the Colossians to persevere in faith, never wavering in maintaining unqualified trust in God and his Son. (1:23)

After mentioning that the evangel or glad tidings about Jesus Christ had been preached "in all creation under heaven" or in the then-known world, Paul spoke of himself as having become its servant. He could speak of himself in this manner because he laboured to advance the good news about Christ. (1:23)

Although he had not personally ministered in Colossae, Paul wrote, "Now I am rejoicing in the sufferings for you." The fact that affliction, which included being imprisoned and chained, had come to be his lot gave him reason for inner joy, as this had happened to him on account of faithfully advancing the cause of Christ. In particular, this involved Paul's labouring primarily among the non-Jewish peoples and teaching that faith in the Son of God, not adherence to the Mosaic law, led to a divinely approved standing. As a result, Paul became an object of intense hostility to unbelieving fellow Jews. (Compare Acts 18:13; 21:27-29; 22:17-22) Because his suffering for the name of Christ mainly came about on account of being an apostle to the non-Jewish peoples, he could speak of suffering for them. This included the non-Jewish believers in Colossae. (1:24; and, Ephesians 5:27.) The end in view in Christ's reconciling work, realised in His finished sacrifice, is to present the believer holy, faultless and beyond reproof before God.

1: 24-29

Christ's glory proclaimed in Paul's ministry

Verses 24-25a By Paul's suffering

The apostle added that he was filling up the things “lacking of the tribulations of the Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the church” or the community of believers. (1:24) Paul could speak of filling up a lack, for the affliction he endured in his body had not come to an end. He knew that more suffering lay ahead prior to his completing his course in faithfulness. As a member of Christ's body, the congregation of believers, Paul referred to his “tribulations” or afflictions as being those “of Christ,” the head of the body. Whatever affects the members of the body also affects the head, and the Son of God considers the distress and suffering of his disciples as his own. (Matthew 25:34-45)

Paul's role in the “church” or the community of believers was that of a “minister” or “servant,” diligently working to advance their spiritual well-being. God had given him a stewardship, duty, or responsibility for believers, including the Colossians, “to fulfil the word of God.” (1:25a) His “fulfilling” God's word could mean making it fully known, not holding back any part of the message believers needed to know. (Compare Acts 20:20.)

Verses 25d-29 By his fulfilling the word of God

In past ages and past generations, this “word” or message proved to be a hidden mystery. It was hidden away or concealed from everyone, for the mystery was not revealed as it finally was to those who became “holy ones” or God's people in the first century after Jesus' death and resurrection. To the “holy ones,” God chose to make known “the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The expression “the riches of the glory of this mystery” apparently describes the magnificence or the grandeur of this previously hidden message revealed in all its fullness or richness. Paul referred to the revealed mystery as being “Christ in you.” The Colossians, though formerly people of the nations without God or hope, came into a relationship with his beloved Son. Christ made his home with them, working within them to aid them to reflect the image of his Father in attitude, word, and action. As the head, he came to be attached to them as members of his body. Furthermore, they would become sharers in his glory or his matchless magnificence as the possessor of all divinely granted authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, Paul rightly called Christ “the hope of glory” or the one upon whom the fulfilment of their hope to share in his glory depended. (1:26, 27)

Paul's proclamation focused on Christ, and he did not limit his teaching to a select few. The apostle admonished "every man" or every person, which would have included his telling them about Christ's return in glory and how to escape the wrath to come upon those defiantly persisting in unbelief. (1 Thessalonians 1:10) The apostle also taught "every man" or every person "in all wisdom." His teaching harmonized with divinely granted wisdom and included all essential aspects of the message about God's Son. (Compare Matthew 28:20; Acts 13:23-41; 20:24-27; 2 Peter 3:15, 16.) Regarding the objective of his admonition and teaching, Paul added, "that we might present every man [everyone] perfect in Christ." For all to be "perfect in Christ" would denote their being full-grown members of Christ's body inseparably attached to him as their head and at one with him. (Compare John 15:4-10; 17:23.) Having this noble objective in view, Paul laboured with all his might. Although personally exerting himself strenuously, he did not do so in his own strength but with the aid of Christ's power at work in him.

Notes on Chapter 1:

After "God our Father" (1:2), other manuscripts add, "and [the] Lord Jesus Christ," "and our Lord Jesus Christ," and "and Jesus Christ our Lord."

The opening words of verse 5 (*diá tén elpída* ["because of the hope"]) could be linked with "we thank" in verse 3. It seems preferable, however, to view the words "because of the hope" as continuing the thought expressed in verse 4. A number of translations make this significance explicit. "We have heard of your faith in Christ and your love for all of God's people, because what you hope for is kept safe for you in heaven." (CEV) "When the true message, the Good News, first came to you, you heard about the hope it offers. So your faith and love are based on what you hope for, which is kept safe for you in heaven." (GNT, Second Edition)

A number of translations punctuate verses 11 and 12 in a way that conveys a different meaning for the expression "with joy." Instead of associating the joy with endurance and patience, these translations link the joy to the giving of thanks, using such renderings as "joyfully giving thanks" (NIV, NRSV), "to give joyful thanks" (REB), and "giving thanks with joy" (NJB) In the letter to the Philippians (1:4), Paul does speak about his praying "with joy." Endurance of suffering with joy, however, figures prominently in the Scriptures, and this provides a sound basis for concluding that the passage in Colossians has this significance.

After “Father” (in verse 12), certain manuscripts add “of Christ” or “and God,” or read “God the Father” and “the God and Father.” With reference to “fitted,” the oldest extant manuscripts say “you” (with specific reference to the Colossians), but many later manuscripts read “us.”

The style of the Greek text for verses 15 through 20 suggests that the words may have been part of a hymn. A number of translations have set off these verses according to a poetic arrangement (examples being CEV, HCSB, NAB, NJB).

In verse 19, the one who was pleased is not identified, and translators commonly have supplied “God” as the subject. When God is not supplied, the passage (1:19, 20) could be rendered as in the *New American Bible*, “For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross [through him], whether those on earth or those in heaven.” This rendering personifies “fullness” and could be taken to mean that Christ reconciled all to himself. As expressed in other parts of the Scriptures, however, humans are reconciled to God through Christ, and this is more likely the meaning in the letter to the Colossians. Therefore, God may rightly be understood as being pleased to have all fullness dwell in his Son and through him to effect the reconciliation. (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:16)

A literal reading of verse 21 would be, “And once being alienated and enemies to the mind in the evil works.” In an effort to make the passage more explicit and understandable, translators have added words and conveyed varying meanings. “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.” (NIV) “And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind because of evil deeds, he has now reconciled...” (NAB) “And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled...” (NRSV) “Formerly you yourselves were alienated from God, his enemies in heart and mind, as your evil deeds showed.” (REB) “You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things.” (CEV) “At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought.” (GNT, Second Edition) “This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions...” (NLT) “At one time you were separated from God. You were his enemies in your minds, and the evil things you did were against God.” (NCV)

In Luke 3:38, the first human, Adam, is identified as being a son of God. Through an act of disobedience to his God and Father, Adam alienated himself from him. As a result, all of his descendants came to be part of a human family

estranged from God. The evidence for the state of alienation is the internal awareness humans have of being flawed or sinful, unable to be the kind of persons they would like to be. The Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BCE) referred to this internal awareness when admitting his personal concern to be “failure to cultivate virtue, failure to go more deeply into what I have learned, inability, when I am told what is right, to move to where it is, and inability to reform myself when I have defects.” (Analects, Book VII, 3, translated by D. C. Lau) The flawed human condition repeatedly disrupts good relationships with fellow humans and, in its extreme manifestations, is responsible for horrendous acts of inhumanity.

Although permitting the first human pair to become parents, with their offspring becoming part of a flawed human family, God did not bar their children and later descendants from having a relationship with him. If they desired that relationship and wanted to do what is right, he responded to them as their loving and caring Father and God. (Compare Acts 10:34, 35; 14:14-17; 17:24-28; Hebrews 11:4-38.) Then, by sending his Son to the earth, he reached out to humans everywhere to cease being in a condition of estrangement and come to enjoy the dignified status of being his beloved children. By letting his Son suffer and voluntarily die a shameful death, God revealed the seriousness of sin and the greatness of his love for the human family in a way that nothing else could. By accepting the sacrificial death of Christ as the basis for being forgiven of sin and then ceasing to be burdened by the flawed human condition preventing an approved relationship with God, the individual is reconciled to him. For believers, the greatness of God’s forgiveness prompts a response of love and gratitude, and what that forgiveness involved on the part of God and Christ impresses on them the matchless depth of divine love. In the case of the individual believer, the personal conviction is: “God sent his Son because he loved me. God, through Christ, pardoned me. Christ died for me.” This conviction provides the motivation for wanting to live life as an obedient and loving child of God, fully reconciled to him.

Verse 29 does not identify Christ as the source of the energy energizing Paul with power. In the previous verse, however, Christ is mentioned and in his first letter to Timothy (1:12), Paul specifically speaks of being strengthened by the Lord Jesus Christ. A number of translations have, in fact, inserted Christ. “To this end I am toiling strenuously with all the energy and power of Christ at work in me.” (REB) “To get this done I toil and struggle, using the mighty strength which Christ supplies and which is at work in me.” (GNT, Second Edition) “I work very hard at this, as I depend on Christ’s mighty power that works within me.” (NLT) “To do this, I work and struggle, using Christ’s great strength that works so powerfully in me.” (NCV)

Colossians 2: 1-23

2:1-7

Christ the answer to doctrinal error

Verses 1 – 2a-b The conflict with error

Although Paul had not personally visited the believers in Colossae, Laodicea, and numerous other places, he wanted them to know about his great “struggle” for those who had not seen his face “in the flesh.” As evident from this particular letter, he was deeply concerned that proponents of error would not succeed in leading fellow believers astray. His “struggle” was one of anxious care or mental wrestling for his brothers in Christ, which struggle would have been reflected in the intensity of his prayers for them and in the depth of thought and the great effort his letters to them required. (2:1)

Erroneous teaching can have an unsettling effect on the “heart” or the deep inner self. (Compare Acts 15:1, 2, 24; Ephesians 4:14.) Paul’s objective, therefore, was to comfort or to reassure the hearts of the Colossians, leading to an inner calm. False teaching is divisive, gives rise to bitter arguments, breeds mistrust, and alienates those who are inclined to believe it from those who oppose it. The apostle was concerned that believers remain “united in love.” He wanted them to be in possession of “all the riches of the certainty of comprehension” or the truly valuable confidence from knowing that they correctly understood “the mystery of God,” summed up in Christ and relating to all that the Father accomplished through his Son. The spiritual struggle was to the end that God’s people at Colossae and Laodicea might be comforted or consoled by the truth, 2a; that they might be united in love, 2b; that they might have full assurance of salvation brought by understanding the mystery of God, which centres in the grace of God, 2c.

Verses 2c – 7 The answer to error

Paul recognized the inestimable value resulting from being confident about possessing the correct understanding, as this serves to protect one from being deceived. (2:2c)

Christ’s teaching and example provide believers with everything needed to conduct themselves as God’s beloved children. Christ is the depository of “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” In saying what he did, Paul wanted to shield the Colossians from being deluded by plausible or specious arguments. (2:3, 4)

Even though he was not “present in flesh” or personally with the community of believers in Colossae, he was with them “in spirit.” They were in his thoughts, and what he had learned about them prompted him to rejoice. Evidently based on what Epaphras had told him, Paul could see their “order” and the firmness of their faith in Christ. Their “order” may be understood to mean that their conduct harmonized with their identifying as Christ’s disciples. They were not disorderly like certain idlers in Thessalonica who, instead of working, injected themselves into the private affairs of others. (2 Thessalonians 3:11) Unlike some in Corinth who were disruptive when believers assembled, the Colossians observed proper decorum. (1 Corinthians 14:20-35) Their faith or unqualified trust in Christ as the Son of God and his sacrifice for them proved to be stable or strong.

When accepting Jesus Christ, the Colossians would have acknowledged him as their Lord and God’s Son who died for them and whom the Father raised from the dead. In keeping with their original acceptance or confession, they were to continue to walk “in him.” This would require their conducting themselves in harmony with his example and teaching, submitting themselves to him as their Lord. Their walk would be “in him” or in a state of oneness with him as members of his body, the community of believers of which he is the head. For them to be “rooted” in Christ would denote their being firmly and securely attached to him. He would also be their solid foundation. Inseparably united to him, they would be “built up” in him, continuing to grow or progress in their spiritual life. (2:6, 7)

2: 8-13

The peril of false philosophy

Verse 8 The warning

The “faith,” as the Colossians were taught it, incorporated all that they had learned about Jesus Christ and his Father. In this faith or body of belief, they were to be confirmed, established, or made strong. In view of all the blessings in which they shared and which they continued to experience because of their faith in Christ, the Colossians had ample reason to abound in thanksgiving. They needed to watch, being ever vigilant, lest someone make them captives, gaining control over them as if they were booty to be carried off. Paul identified philosophy, empty delusion, and human traditions as the means by which they could be victimized. Philosophy here would include speculative reasoning that appeared to reflect wisdom but was, in actuality, harmful foolishness. Although “empty” or hollow, the reasoning or argumentation would appear to be sound and therein would lie its persuasive power to delude. Proponents of error relied on “tradition,” second-hand information that had been handed down from

previous generations and accepted without scrutiny. The empty, speculative thoughts had their source in the “elements of the world,” not in Christ. (2:8)

Verse 9-13 The remedy

A number of modern translations have interpretively rendered the Greek expression *stoicheía toú kósmou* as “elemental spirits of the universe” (NRSV, REB) or “elemental powers of the world” (NAB). Those who did not know the true God did believe that numerous celestial spirits exercised control over them, and this had an enslaving effect. In view of the mention of “traditions of men,” however, it seems preferable to regard the “elements of the world” as being the basic principles operative in the world alienated from God. Any belief system that ignores Christ, implies that he is not the depository of all knowledge and wisdom, or conflicts with his example and teaching is of the world. (Compare 1 John 4:5, 6; also see the comments on these verses in the Commentary section.) The Colossians, therefore, had good reason to be on guard against anyone who did not have a proper view of Christ. It is uniquely in Christ that “all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily.” Embodied in him is everything that his Father is, or completely present in Christ is all that constitutes the divine. (2:9)

“In him” or by reason of their being at one with Christ, the Colossian believers shared in his matchless fullness. Therefore, with reference to their spiritual life, they lacked nothing and needed no supplementing from other sources. Further emphasizing the greatness of Christ, Paul added that he is “the head of all dominion and authority.” Accordingly, any other source for claimed enlightenment—either from the human or the spirit realm—would be vastly inferior and, in fact, injurious. (2:10)

By incorporation into Christ as members of his body or “in him,” the Colossians had been “circumcised.” This was not an operation performed with hands or of a physical nature but proved to be a removal of the “body of flesh” or the old sinful self. Paul called the nonphysical circumcision “the circumcision of Christ” or one which God’s Son effected. (2:11)

Before their baptism, the Colossians had repented of their sins. Then, “in baptism,” they were “buried” with Christ, dying to their former life of sin. “Through” or by reason of their faith in the active power of God who raised Christ from the dead, they were also raised in Christ to a newness of life. As persons “in Christ” as members of his body, they were no longer burdened by the old sinful self. That old sinful self had been stripped away and a new life as children of God and brothers of Christ had begun. When calling attention to God’s raising Christ from the dead, Paul revealed the greatness of the change

and the divine power at work in bringing it about at the time the Colossians were buried with Christ in baptism and raised in him. That this included more than the outward act of baptism on the part of the Colossians is indicated by the reference to their faith in God's power. (2:12)

In the past, they had been dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of their flesh. Although alive physically, they were condemned sinners with no future prospect other than a short life that would end at death. In their uncircumcised state, the Colossians were not in possession of the covenant relationship with God that circumcision represented. God, however, made them alive together with his Son, forgiving them (and all others who responded in faith) all their transgressions. (2:13)

2:14-17

The peril of legalism

Verses 14-15 Legal observances were done away in Christ

The Greek word *cheirógraphon* denotes a "handwritten document" and, more specifically, a certificate of indebtedness or record of debts. Decrees or legal requirements were linked to that "handwritten document." Including himself, Paul wrote respecting this document that it "stood against us." It appears that the apostle here referred to the Mosaic law with its specific decrees or legal demands and which made those unable to live up to the legal claims hopeless debtors. God wiped out this record of debt to the Mosaic law. He took it out of the way by "nailing it to the cross." Accordingly, both Jews and non-Jews gained an approved standing with God through faith in his arrangement for forgiveness of sins on the basis of his Son's sacrificial death. Through the victory his Son attained by his death, the Father stripped dominions and authorities of their power, openly or publicly exposed them, and triumphed over them. Thus the powers of darkness that people in the first century commonly feared and believed as needing to be appeased through the observance of special days and rituals were defeated, ceasing to have any hold on those who accepted the Son of God as their Lord and the one through whom forgiveness of sins had been made possible. (2:14, 15)

The Father, through his Son, had liberated the Colossians. Therefore, they were not to permit others to judge or condemn them on the basis of what they ate or drank or the observance of a festival, new moon, or Sabbath. Although the Mosaic law set forth regulations about food and drink as well as weekly, monthly, and yearly observances, these outward aspects of worship were but a shadow of a new arrangement centring in Christ. (Exodus 23:10-17; Leviticus

11:2-44; 23:3-44; Numbers 6:2, 3) They were like the shadow cast by a tangible object. To Christ belongs the reality or substance. (2:16, 17), the believer is complete in Christ and has been accepted by Him.

2:19-19

The peril of false mysticism

Verse 18 The form of the error

Verse 19 The reason for the error

The Greek word *katabrabeúo* could either denote to “decide against” or to “deprive one of a prize.” In verse 18, translators have variously rendered the term. “Let no one disqualify you.” (NAB) “Do not be cheated of your prize.” (NJB) The apostle’s thought appears to be that the Colossians should not let those whom he next described deceive them, thereby depriving them of what is rightfully theirs as children of God. The teachers of error either insisted on self-abasement or they feigned humility, as if not worthy to approach God directly, and advocated the worship of angels. These teachers of falsehood appear to have drawn on claimed visions to support their views. The Greek term *embateúo*, which follows “the things seen,” may be understood to mean “to enter,” “to take a stand,” or “to enter into” or “to investigate.” Translators have variously rendered the Greek text as signifying “access to some visionary world” (REB), going “into great detail about what he has seen” (NIV), “taking his stand on visions” (NAB), “pinning every hope on visions received” (NJB), “dwelling on visions” (NRSV), and bragging “about seeing visions” (CEV). The minds of the proponents of error gave evidence of a fleshly or unspiritual condition, as they had an inflated view of themselves. Possibly this hollow conceit arose from the things they claimed to have seen or their visions. They did not hold fast to the head or to Christ and, therefore, lost everything needful for the growth and nourishment of the members of his body. From him alone as the head, the entire body, with its joints and ligaments or unifying elements, is supplied and grows with the growth God gives. (2:18, 19) Apart from God’s Son, no spiritual growth exists.

2:20-23

The peril of asceticism

Verse 20a The believer’s emancipation from legalistic ordinances

Verses 20b – 23 Result of this emancipation

At the time of their baptism, the Colossian believers had died with Christ and came to enjoy a newness of life as liberated children of God. Therefore, they also died to the “elements of the world” or to the basic principles and beliefs that had formerly governed how they conducted themselves. Their former status was like that of small children in a state of ignorance and subjected to commands such as “don’t taste,” “don’t touch,” and “don’t handle.” Because of what Christ had done for them, the Colossians ceased to be persons needing to be treated like little children respecting matters of food and drink. They were no longer a part of the world alienated from God. Why, then, should they live as still in the world, submitting themselves to commands not to handle, taste, or touch things that perish when used? Upon being consumed, food and drink cease to be, and the regulations respecting such matters were “the commands and teachings of men.” (2:20-22)

These commands and teachings seemingly had an appearance of wisdom. There would have been a certain air of impressiveness about the self-imposed piety, with a focus on self-abasement and asceticism. In reality, though, a humanly devised routine of worship, a show of humility, and a severe discipline of the body had no value when it came to satisfying the cravings of the flesh. The sensual desires and passions remained unabated. (2:23)

Notes on Chapter 2:

With reference to the mystery (2:2), the words “of God, Christ” have the oldest extant manuscript support. Other manuscript readings include “of God,” “of Christ,” “of God and Christ,” “of God, which is Christ,” “of God [the] Father in Christ Jesus,” “of the God and Father of Christ,” and “of the God and Father and of Christ.”

In 2:5, the Greek word for “order” (*táxis*) can also denote “rank,” “post,” or “position.” This significance is reflected in the interpretive rendering of the *Revised English Bible*, “I may be absent in body, but in spirit I am with you, and rejoice to see your unbroken ranks and the solid front which your faith in Christ presents.”

There is considerable uncertainty about what may have been the original reading of the concluding words in 2:7. Manuscript readings include “abounding in thanksgiving,” “abounding in it [faith] in thanksgiving,” and “abounding in him [Christ] in thanksgiving.”

In verse 13, manuscripts read either “made you [the Colossians] alive together with him” or “made us [believers] alive together with him.” There are also manuscripts that do not include the pronoun “you” or “us.”

In verses 13 through 15, the Greek text does not specifically refer to God as the one acting. The previous reference to God in verse 12 and the context, however, make it clear that the reference is to the Father. In the case of verse 15, some translations have inserted Christ. “There Christ defeated all powers and forces. He let the whole world see them being led away as prisoners when he celebrated his victory.” (CEV) “And on that cross Christ freed himself from the power of the spiritual rulers and authorities; he made a public spectacle of them by leading them as captives in his victory procession.” (GNT, Second Edition) In the absence of Christ as an antecedent, it would appear preferable to regard the Father as the subject also in verse 15. Other translations have made this explicit. “In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ.” (NLT) “God stripped the spiritual rulers and powers of their authority. With the cross, he won the victory and showed the world that they were powerless.” (NCV)

In verse 15, the Greek term *thriambeúo* has been variously understood to mean “triumph over,” “lead in triumph,” “lead in a triumphal procession,” or “disgrace,” and this accounts for a variety of renderings. The word *staurós* does not appear in this verse, but translators, on the basis of verse 14, have often inserted “cross” for the masculine pronoun in the dative case (*autó*), which pronoun could be understood to refer to Christ. *The New Jerusalem Bible*, reads “him” and renders the passage, “He has stripped the sovereignties and the ruling forces, and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession.” The *New Life Bible* interpretively paraphrases the verse, “God took away the power of the leaders of this world and the powers of darkness. He showed them to the world. The battle was won over them through Christ.”

Colossians 3: 1-25 and 4: 1-18

3: 1-4

Union with Christ and a holy or sanctified life

Verses 1 and 2 Basis of a holy or sanctified life, and exhortation to that life

The opening word “if” (*ei*) here has the sense of “since.” Having been raised with Christ to a newness of life, believers should focus on the things above, where Christ is seated at God’s right hand. This would call for them to have noble thoughts, not being preoccupied with matters limited to the earthly sphere

of life, such as regulations respecting food and drink. Their minds should be on the things above, the things outside the earthly sphere, as their Lord is above and their hope is to be united with him. (3:1, 2)

Verses 3-4 Reasons for these exhortations

Paul again reminded the Colossians that they had “died,” ceasing to be the persons they once were as humans without God and any dependable hope. Theirs was now a life “hidden with Christ in God.” As a life “hidden with Christ,” it is intimately bound up with him. Believers are part of Christ’s body and, through him, have received a newness of life as beloved children of God. By reason of the Son’s oneness with the Father, this new life is “in God” as its ultimate source. (3:3)

With reference to the manifestation of Christ, manuscripts vary in referring to God’s Son as “your life” or “our life.” On account of Christ, believers enjoy a newness of life. He is their life. Through him they have come into possession of this life, and for him they live. At his manifestation, they are assured of being united with him and revealed in the transcendent glory of incorruptible or imperishable bodies in the sinless state. (3:4; compare 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.)

3:5-7

Pronouncing death on a sinful life

Verse 5a Death sentence declared

Verses 5b – 7 Results of failure to pronounce the death

In view of the indescribable splendour in which believers are destined to share, their conduct should be a reflection of their hope. Paul urged the Colossians to deaden their earthly body members, forcibly restraining them from engaging in divinely disapproved practices. He then listed sexual immorality, uncleanness or impure, defiling conduct (likely of a sexual nature), passion or lust, evil or corrupt desires, and covetousness. The Greek word for “covetousness” (*pleonexía*) denotes an inordinate desire for more than would be one’s rightful due or possession and may also be defined as meaning “greediness” or “insatiability.” It is an addiction for wanting more. The apostle referred to it as being idolatry. The object of the insatiable craving becomes the individual’s exclusive focus and thus an idol, and the greedy desire for the object is an idolatrous fixation. God’s wrath or his retributive judgment is certain to be directed against any kind of moral corruption. According to many ancient manuscripts, God’s wrath is to come “upon the sons of disobedience” or upon those who choose to live contrary to his ways. (3:5, 6) ‘Evil desire’ is the

insatiable craving or burning desire generated by such indulgence. ‘Greed’ the desire to have more and more, is idolatry because it relegates God to a secondary place or ostracises Him altogether (Ephesians 5:5). These sins bring ‘the wrath of God’ upon the unsaved, 6. Pollution by them will result in severe chastening of believers, 7. (1 Corinthians 3:12-17, 5:1-5).

3:8-17

Putting on the new self

Verses 8-9 Putting off the old

Verses 10-17 Putting on the new

Before accepting the message about God’s Son, the Colossians had “walked” or conducted themselves as morally corrupt persons. Continuing to direct his words to the Colossians, Paul added, “you lived in these,” meaning either that they lived the kind of life typical of the moral wrongs he had mentioned or that they lived among those who practiced such things and conducted themselves as they did. As persons whose lives were bound up with God’s Son, they needed to rid themselves of the attitudes, speech, and actions associated with their past conduct. The Colossian believers were to banish anger or a bad temper, fury or a tendency to flare up in rage, depravity or vice, defamatory or blasphemous speech, and filthy language. As members of the body of Christ, they were to speak the truth to one another and not be guilty of speaking lies to fellow believers. (Compare Ephesians 4:25.) Like a garment that is taken off, the “old man” or old self and all associated corrupt attitudes, words, and actions needed to be stripped away. Believers should then clothe themselves with the “new man” or the new self. That new self is “renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.” This is indicative of continual growth in ever closer conformity to the image of God. He is the “creator” of the new self, effecting the growth and transformation by means of his spirit. (3:7-10) The process of remaking, reshaping, or moulding, with ever-increasing knowledge in view, continues throughout the believer’s earthly sojourn. The apostle did not specify whether this knowledge relates to knowing God (a progressive growth in one’s personal relationship with him) or the ever-increasing knowledge of what constitutes a life that honours him and his beloved Son. As children of God enjoying a newness of life, the old distinctions (“Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, foreigner, Sythian, slave [regarded as a thing and not a person in the Roman world] and freeman”) that divided people one from another had been abolished. The Greek word for “foreigner” is *bárbaros* and basically denotes one whose speech would be unintelligible to the native populace, or one who did not speak Greek and would have been regarded as uncultured. The

Sythians were known for being extremely fierce and cruel. In the case of believers, social, cultural, and class differences no longer matter, “but Christ [is] all and in all.” For the believer whose hope and life is intimately bound up with him, Christ is everything. As the head, his guidance and influence are at work in all the members of his body and so he is “in all.” (3:11)

The Colossian believers were “chosen of God” to be his people. They were “holy” because of having been pardoned of their sins on the basis of their faith in Christ and were beloved of God as his adopted children. In keeping with their changed status, they needed to be fittingly attired with traits reflective of their newness of life. In a cruel world where pity was woefully lacking, Paul admonished the Colossians to clothe themselves with affectionate compassion, kindness, humility (often reflected in a readiness to serve others), gentleness or considerateness, and patience or forbearance. Although forgiven of their sins, believers are still subject to the pressures exerted by their flawed condition as humans. Therefore, as Paul admonished the Colossians, they needed to be tolerant or patient with one another and forgiving whenever there might be an occasion for complaint. As the Lord (according to other manuscripts, Christ or God) has lovingly pardoned believers, so should they. Upon all the noble attributes he mentioned, Paul urged the Colossians to put on love, for love is the strongest unifying force. The apostle referred to love as the “bond of perfection” or the perfect bond. (3:12-14)

The “peace of Christ” would be the inner tranquillity of which he is the source. For the “peace of Christ” to serve as the arbiter, umpire, or controlling element in the heart would mean that the deep inner self would be in a state of calmness stemming from the assurance of Christ’s abiding guidance, care, concern, and aid. The “peace of Christ” banishes internal feelings of undue disquietude, alarm, or foreboding. In one body, believers, as individual members thereof, were called to enjoy this peace, and Paul encouraged the Colossians to continue to be thankful. They had good reason to be grateful for all the blessings they had received and continued to enjoy upon accepting the glad tidings about God’s Son. (3:15)

For the “word” or message of Christ to dwell richly in the Colossians would signify its having become part of them in all its wealth or fullness, guiding or influencing their thoughts, speech, and conduct. There is a possibility that “richly” is to be linked with the words “in all wisdom.” This could mean that believers come into possession of a wealth of wisdom when the message about God’s Son becomes part of their deep inner selves. It seems preferable, however, to regard “in all wisdom” as applying to teaching. Numerous translations convey this significance. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you

richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another.” (NAB) “Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom.” (NJB) “Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other.” (CEV) The “wisdom” that would be the basis for teaching and admonishing, advising, or instructing would have its source in the “word of Christ.” (3:16)

The words “singing in your hearts to God” (or “Lord,” according to the reading of other manuscripts) probably are to be understood to mean that out of appreciation or gratitude in their hearts or their deep inner selves, the Colossians were to sing. They would sing psalms (compositions contained in the book of Psalms), hymns (praises directed to God), and spiritual songs (compositions dealing with spiritual matters). The mention of hymns and spiritual songs indicates that numerous Christian compositions already existed. (3:16)

Doing all things, whether in word or in deed, in the “name of the Lord Jesus” would denote letting one’s speech and action be of a nature that would honor Jesus Christ as Lord. Believers would never forget their being accountable and indebted to him, for he is the one who died for them. The Father is the ultimate source of all the joys and blessings in which believers share. Appropriately, therefore, they would thank “God the Father” through Christ, thereby appreciatively acknowledging that their standing as God’s children and all the blessings associated therewith have been made possible through the Son. (3:17)

3:18 – 4:6

A heavenly walk and domestic relationship

3:18-21 Wives, husbands, and children

3:22 – 4:1 Servants, masters

4:2-6 General principles

The approved relationship with God and Christ calls for the fulfilment of social duties. For wives, it meant respecting the headship of their husbands, submitting themselves to them. Such submission would involve cooperating with their husbands in caring well for the home and the family. In carrying out their responsibilities, wives would conduct themselves toward their husbands in a manner befitting their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. (3:18)

Husbands should love their wives, imitating Christ’s example of love for his disciples. (Compare Ephesians 5:25-31.) In the event problems or disagreements cropped up, husbands were to avoid becoming embittered toward their wives.

Their heeding Paul's admonition would promote a peaceful home atmosphere, not one repeatedly marred by harsh words and actions. (3:19)

The obedience of children to their parents in everything that could rightfully be required of them also had a spiritual reason. "This is pleasing in the Lord." Exemplary obedience pleases the Lord Jesus Christ and honors him, and it is the right course for all those who are "in the Lord" or at one with him. (3:20)

Paul urged fathers not to irritate their children, which would be the effect of harsh and unreasonable demands, inconsistent treatment of children for infractions, and displays of favouritism. Words and actions that irritate or provoke children could cause them to become dispirited or discouraged, depriving them of joy, a wholesome sense of well-being, and the motivation to be cooperative. (3:21)

Paul urged slaves to be exemplary in obeying their human masters in everything pertaining to their duties. Unlike slaves who rendered "eye service" or worked only when they were being watched and just enough not to incur displeasure, Christian slaves were not to labour merely to curry favour but to do so sincerely, from the heart, out of reverential regard for the Lord Jesus Christ. In whatever they did, they were to put their all into it or their whole "soul," working as for the Lord Jesus Christ and not simply for men. Their serving would be with the knowledge or awareness that he would reward them with the inheritance, having them share in the inheritance of everything that he had been granted. Emphasizing the aspect about whom they were serving, Paul added, "Slave for the Lord Christ." (3:22-24)

Whereas human masters might be unjust, the Son of God would never treat anyone unfairly. Wrongdoers would be repaid in kind, and the Lord Jesus Christ would not show favouritism or partiality. Therefore, Christian slaves could serve conscientiously, honouring him by their exemplary labours and confidently looking to him to right all injustices. (3:25)

Notes on Chapter 3:

In verse 3, P46 (from about 200) and fourth-century Codex Vaticanus do not include the words, "upon the sons of disobedience."

In verse 10, the context is not sufficient to establish the precise meaning of the words "renewed into knowledge" (*anakainoúmenon eis epígnosin*). This has given rise to a variety of renderings: "moulded afresh unto personal knowledge" (Rotherham), "moulded into full knowledge" (Weymouth), and "brought to know God" (REB).

In verse 15, “peace of Christ” has good manuscript support. Other manuscripts read “peace of God.”

In verse 16, the expression “word of Christ” has strong manuscript support. Other manuscripts read “word of God” or “word of the Lord.”

Instead of “God [the] Father” (verse 17), other manuscripts read “God and Father” and “Father and God.”

Christianity and slavery: Although Paul never condones slavery, arguing to the contrary in Galatians 3:28 that the slave and the free man are one in Christ, he does recognise it as part of the law of the land and an inherent part of Romans culture. As a result, he offers instructions to both slaves and slave owners concerning their behaviour under Christ. This should not be interpreted, however, as an acceptance of the practice (Philemon and Onesimus).

The apostle reminded Christian masters or slave owners that they had an Owner, Master, or Lord in the heavens. They were accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, requiring that they treat their slaves justly and fairly. (4:1)

Paul admonished the Colossians to “devote” themselves to prayer. The Greek term for “devote” (*proskarteréo*) signifies to have a firm attachment to something or to hold fast to it. In relation to prayer, *proskarteréo* could include the thought of persevering or persisting in and highly appreciating the value and importance of prayer. “Remaining awake in it in thanksgiving” would mean remaining alert and truly heartfelt in prayer, guarding against becoming mechanical and merely repeating words without having the mind and emotions fully engaged. The addition of “in thanksgiving” suggests that a spirit of gratitude for all divine gifts and blessings should accompany prayer. (4:2)

Paul requested the Colossians to pray that God would open to him a “door of the word” or provide him with an opportunity to declare the message about the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to continue declaring “the mystery of Christ,” and found himself in bonds because of having done so. The way in which non-Jewish peoples would become children of God had remained secret or hidden in past generations. The good news about Jesus Christ, however, revealed this mystery. It is the “mystery of Christ,” as it is a disclosed secret that is exclusively bound up with him. Paul wanted to be sure to be able to speak about the “mystery of Christ” in the manner that he should, making it clear to others. Therefore, he requested the Colossians also to include this aspect in their prayers for him. (4:3, 4)

Although enjoying a newness of life as children of God, the Colossians still lived among those who did not share their faith and needed to interact with them on a daily basis. With reference to those outside the community of believers, they needed to “walk in wisdom” or conduct themselves wisely. This would have included being exemplary in all aspects of life and not giving offense, choosing to refrain from activities that may not have been wrong in themselves but were unacceptable in the existing culture. (Compare 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; Titus 2:2-5.) At the same time, Paul encouraged the Colossians to make the best use of the time or opportunity. It would appear that this included using opportunities that might present themselves to share the message about God’s Son. (4:5) A number of translations paraphrase his words to convey this meaning in conjunction with the next verse. “When you are with unbelievers, always make good use of the time. Be pleasant and hold their interest when you speak the message. Choose your words carefully and be ready to give answers to anyone who asks questions.” (CEV) “Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity. When you talk, you should always be kind and pleasant so you will be able to answer everyone in the way you should.” (NCV) “Be wise in the way you live around those who are not Christians. Make good use of your time. Speak with them in such a way they will want to listen to you. Do not let your talk sound foolish. Know how to give the right answer to anyone.” (NLB)

A more literal reading of verse 6 would be, “[Let] your word always [be] gracious, seasoned with salt, that you might know how you ought to respond to each one.” Believers should speak in a kindly and considerate manner to others or in a way that invites a favourable response. The objective would be to present the message about Christ in a manner that would appeal to the conscience of others. For expressions to be “seasoned with salt” suggests that the well-chosen words would be palatable to the hearers and not give rise to disputing. Moreover, the response given would be appropriate for the person who might raise a question.

4:7-18

A holy or sanctified life and Christian fellowship

Verses 7-15 The commendation of fellow workers

Verses 16-18 Instructions and salutations

Paul planned to send Tychicus to Colossae. He would provide the community of believers there with news about Paul. The apostle described Tychicus as a “beloved brother,” “faithful servant,” and “fellow slave in the Lord.” These

expressions reflected Paul's affection for and trust in Tychicus as one serving with him in the interests of Christ. (For other references to Tychicus, see Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12.) Besides informing the Colossians about all things concerning Paul, the visit of Tychicus would serve to "comfort [their] hearts," which could have included his allaying any troubling concerns they may have had about Paul's imprisonment. (4:7, 8)

The apostle informed the Colossians that Onesimus would be accompanying Tychicus. Paul referred to Onesimus as a "faithful and beloved brother" from among them. The apostle's letter to Philemon reveals that Onesimus had been a useless slave to his owner Philemon, may even have been guilty of theft, and, finally, ran away from his master in Colossae. Through contact with Paul, Onesimus became a believer and demonstrated himself to be a dependable brother in Christ, one for whom the apostle had deep affection. Although Paul would have greatly benefited from the continued assistance Onesimus would have been able to provide, he sent him back to Philemon. From Onesimus, the Colossians would also have been able to gain firsthand knowledge about everything pertaining to Paul in his imprisonment. (4:9)

The apostle included greetings from his fellow workers, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus (also known as Justus), Epaphras, Luke and Demas.

The reference to Aristarchus as a "fellow prisoner" does not necessarily mean that Aristarchus was an actual prisoner. He may have chosen to share Paul's confinement in order to assist him. This is suggested by the fact that, in his letter to Philemon (verse 23), the apostle referred to Epaphras as "my fellow prisoner" and included Aristarchus among his fellow workers. (4:10)

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, had greatly disappointed Paul in earlier years by returning to Jerusalem and not continuing to assist him and Barnabas in declaring the glad tidings about Christ in Asia Minor. (Acts 13:13; 15:37, 38) By the time Paul wrote this letter, he had come to have high regard for Mark, requesting that the Colossians welcome him whenever he might visit them. (4:10)

Paul specifically identified Aristarchus, Jesus (Justus), and Mark as the only Jewish believers working with him for the kingdom of God or in advancing the cause of Christ, God's appointed King. All three of these Jewish brothers had been a source of comfort to him. (4:11)

At the beginning of this letter, Paul had mentioned Epaphras from Colossae (1:7) and here included his greetings, calling him a "slave of Christ." Epaphras

showed his deep concern and love for Colossian brothers in the intensity of his prayers for them. With reference to this brother's supplications, Paul used the Greek word *agonízomai*, meaning to "struggle," "exert oneself," or "wrestle," suggesting great earnestness. He prayed that they would stand firm as mature or full-grown believers and "fully assured in all the will of God." This could mean that they would be solidly grounded in their faith and know for a certainty God's will for them. Paul solemnly confirmed that Epaphras labored hard for the believers in Colossae and also in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. (4:12, 13)

When extending Luke's greetings, Paul identified him as the "beloved physician." (4:14) The fact that the apostle did not include Luke among the Jewish brothers reveals that he was one of Paul's loyal non-Jewish companions. It is noteworthy that, with the distinction between Jew and non-Jew having been abolished through the Son of God, Luke and Paul (the apostle to the nations) wrote the major portion of the collection of writings that became part of the Scriptures in the first century. Previously, the "sayings of God" had been entrusted exclusively to the Jews. (Romans 3:2)

Paul concluded with mentioning the greetings of Demas, another non-Jewish brother. (4:14) Toward the end of the apostle's life, Demas, on account of his love for the existing "age," forsook Paul. Possibly the dangers believers faced prompted Demas to cease being supportive of Paul and seek to shield himself from persecution, or he may actually have abandoned the faith. (2 Timothy 4:10)

Paul requested that the Colossians greet the brothers in Laodicea, Nympha, and the congregation meeting in the house of Nympha. Manuscripts vary in identifying the residence as "her" or "his" house. (4:15)

After the reading of his letter to them, Paul requested that the Colossians make it available for reading to the community of believers in Laodicea. As for the letter directed to believers in Laodicea (which has not been preserved or is conjectured to be the letter to the Ephesians [as the words "in Ephesus" are missing in certain ancient manuscripts]), Paul asked that it be read to the Colossians. (4:16)

Regarding Archippus, Paul wrote, "Say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the service which you have received in the Lord.'" The community of believers and Archippus himself would have known the nature of this special service or ministry. Having received it "in the Lord," Archippus would be discharging his duty in a way that would advance the cause of Christ. (4:17)

Paul had dictated the letter to the Colossians. To identify its being from him, he wrote the greeting with his own hand and asked them to remember his bonds, implying that they continue to pray for him. He concluded with the prayerful expression that the Colossians be the recipients of favor, grace, or unmerited kindness—all the privileges and blessings associated with their being God's beloved children. (4:18)

Notes on Chapter 4:

In 4:8, manuscripts either present Tychicus as letting the Colossians know about Paul ("the things concerning us," the "us" evidently being an editorial plural) or as coming to know how the Colossians were faring ("the things concerning you").

Questionnaire

Chapter 1

1. What title did Paul use to introduce himself? (1)
2. Who gave Paul this title? (1)
3. What are three facts about those to whom the letter was written? (2)
4. What two relationships do the words "saints" and "brothers" suggest ? (2)
5. For what does Paul give thanks? (3-6).
6. Who was Paul's liaison with the Colossian church? (7)
7. How did Paul describe him? (7-8)
8. For what does Paul pray? (9-11)
9. What has been done for us through Christ? (12-14)
10. Who is the image of the invisible God? (13-15)
11. What is the extent of his creation? (16)
12. How could Jesus be before all things? (17)
13. What does "by him all things consist" mean? (17)
14. What two historic events clearly establish Jesus as Lord of the church? (18,20)
16. Is Jesus in the Godhead or is the Godhead in Jesus? (19,2:9)
17. What does the word preeminence mean? (1:18)
18. What is the extent of Christ's reconciliation? (20)
19. Who are the subjects of Christ's reconciliation? (21)
20. What was the method of Christ's reconciliation? (22)
21. What was the purpose of Christ's reconciliation? (22)
22. What was the condition of Christ's reconciliation? (23)
23. What was Paul's part in Christ's reconciliation? (23-25)
24. How did Paul define the mystery? (26-27)

25. How would you describe Paul's ministry? (28-29)

Chapter 2

1. What does Paul desire for the Colossians? (2-7)
2. By what means would some try to deceive Christians? (4,8)
3. How should we walk in Christ Jesus? (6-7)
4. How much of the Godhead dwells in Christ? (9)
5. What does "ye are complete in him" mean? (10)
6. What does Paul show is the New Testament circumcision? (11-13)
7. What was nailed to the cross? (14)
8. What are some things to which Paul referred when he said, "let no man judge you"? (16)
9. What does Paul call the above mentioned things? (17)
10. What other aspects of false doctrine did Paul refute? (18-23)
11. What phrases did Paul use in chapters 1 and 2 to describe "the Person of Christ"?

Chapter 3

1. What are Christians told to do? (1-2)
2. For what future event are we being prepared, and how does this give us incentive for right living? (4)
3. What are the sins which we are to kill? (5)
4. How does God treat those who are involved with the sins mentioned above? (6)
5. What sins of temper and speech are to be put off? (8-9)
6. When one is born again what distinctions lose their significance? (10-11)
7. What qualities should be put on? (12-13)
8. Above all these, what did Paul say to put on? (14)
9. What imperatives were given? (15-16)
10. What did Paul challenge us to do? (17)
11. What is significant about the order of the relationships in verses 18 - 25?
12. What command did Paul give to wives? (18)
13. What command did Paul give to husbands? (19)
14. How is the statement in verse 20 balanced by that of verse 21 ?
15. How is the statement in verse 22 balanced by that of 4:1 ?
16. What is not the proper way to obey? (22)
17. With what attitude should we do the things we do? (23)

Chapter 4

1. What aspects of prayer did Paul mention? (2-3)
2. Why did Paul want prayer for himself? (3)
3. What shows that Paul was in prison when he wrote this epistle? (3,10,18)
4. What pointers did Paul give regarding our conduct toward the unsaved? (5-6)
5. Who carried the epistle to the Colossians? (7-8)
6. For what three reasons did Paul send Tychichus to the Colossian church? (7-9)
7. Who accompanied Tychicus? (9)
8. Who sent greetings? (10-14)
9. What did Paul say about Epaphras? (12-13)
10. What did Paul say about Luke? (14)
11. Where did Paul want this epistle to be read? (16)
12. What did Paul want said to Archippus? (17)

Final Thoughts on the Four Pauline Letters

(Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians)

The driving force behind all that I've done here and taught is an absolute assurance that God loves me. He didn't just love me before I ever committed some of my stupid acts, or He won't just love me in the future when I get my act together. He loves me right now, independent of any worth of my own. It's an unconditional love, not based on my performance. Therefore, I am assured it will continue.

God's love for us is based on Him being love (1 John 4:8), not on our being lovable. That's wonderful news that most Christians and people in the world have not heard. Most people think that they have to do something to earn God's favor; therefore, not many people have much hope of ever measuring up.

The Gospel, as it is being presented among today, actually drives people away from the Lord. Instead of telling people what the Lord has done for them, people preach about what we must do for the Lord. Many people are told that God's acceptance and favour are conditional, based on them measuring up to His standard. This is not the truth. God's true nature and love have not been accurately portrayed.

The only thing that God demands of us is faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This is such a radical truth that evokes such a response of love from us

that the rest of the Christian life is nothing but a response to what Christ has done for us, not an effort to get Christ to respond to us. Praise the Lord! That's awesome!

The Apostle Paul is the one who really brought this truth to light. Jesus demonstrated the grace of God as no one ever had before, but the Apostle Paul is the one the Lord used to give an understanding of this truth in Scripture. Paul shocked the religious people of his day by proclaiming justification apart from performance. The religious leaders couldn't comprehend this. How could they control people if they couldn't demand performance in exchange for God's blessing? What would make the people do the right things?

Paul's answer to these questions was that their love for God would compel them to live holier accidentally than they ever did on purpose. Love is a greater motivator than fear of punishment or rejection; however, the leaders of Paul's day and the majority of the religious leaders today have totally rejected these claims.

It is commonly preached that God withdraws from us when we do wrong and draws closer as we do better. That is just another way of saying that He gives us what we deserve.

Of course, none of us really deserve anything from the Lord, so there must be a little bit of grace mixed with our performance to make this palatable to the masses. In Romans, Paul makes it clear that this theory doesn't wash. Romans 11:6 says that it's either all grace or all works, but not a mixture of the two. We are either acceptable to God based on what we do or on what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us — not a combination of the two. It has to be one way or the other.

The deadliest weapon against the true Gospel is not a total denial of its claims but an addition of other terms or conditions to the only thing that Jesus demanded: faith. Faith in Jesus plus nothing equals total victory. Faith in Jesus plus anything else equals failure. Our faith in Jesus alone is the key to experiencing all of God's best.

This was the whole thrust of Paul's teaching in his letter to the Galatians. The Christians in Galatia had received Christ as their Lord through Paul's ministry and were genuinely saved, but legalistic Jews convinced them that faith in Jesus alone wasn't enough to be in right standing with God. They were also told that they needed to live holy, according to the Jewish standard of holiness, or they would be lost. Paul attacked that doctrine with a vengeance.

The book of Galatians is one of the hardest hitting books in the Bible. Paul doesn't mince any words. He tells it like it is, in almost brutal terms. He didn't do this to hurt the Galatians but because of his great love for them. He considered this truth of the grace of God to be the heart and soul of the Gospel; therefore, any compromising on this issue was unacceptable. There is no true salvation apart from absolute faith in Christ alone. It was Paul's great love for the Galatians that compelled him to invoke curses on any who would pervert the Gospel.

The book of Ephesians is a much gentler letter, but it proclaims the same great truths. Paul starts this letter with a prayer for the Ephesians, that they would receive wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of what they have in Christ. We have already been given everything in Christ. Why should we try and work for something that we already have? That doesn't make sense. It's just a matter of believing and receiving, not working and earning.

In Ephesians, Paul reveals that we are saved by grace through faith and not of ourselves. He also reveals that experiencing the love of God will fill us completely with all the fullness of God. If we aren't experiencing the fullness of God in our lives, then we aren't experiencing God's love in its entirety. The unconditional love of God is the key. Actions are a byproduct of love, not the other way around.

Paul didn't promote ungodly living. He promoted a relationship with the Lord independent of our worthiness. Once an individual comes into relationship with the Lord by faith alone, it becomes the nature of that person to live holy as love becomes the motivator. In the book of Ephesians, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live holy, but from the positive motivation of love instead of the negative motivation of punishment that is so common today.

The book of Philippians gives tremendous insight into the personal life of the Apostle Paul. This letter was written to Paul's biggest supporters and some of his best friends in the ministry. He praised God for their partnership in the Gospel, and he bared his heart to them. He revealed that he was not only willing to die for the sake of Christ, but he was actually looking forward to doing so. He was actually in a struggle as to whether he should stay in this world so he could preach the Gospel or just go on to be with the Lord, which he would much rather do.

How could Paul say such things? How can a person reach a point to where their own life is not the most important thing to them? Paul gives the answers to these questions to his friends in Philippi. He learned how to be content. It didn't come

naturally. He chose to be the way he was. The key was that he had died. You can't threaten, intimidate, or kill a dead man. Paul was dead to himself and alive to God.

How did this happen? It was through the love of God. Paul had such a revelation of the unconditional love of God that it caused him to die to himself and to all his own desires. The love of Christ constrained him to live the way he did. No law could ever do that. No rule or regulation is worth dying for. It was the personal relationship he had with the living Lord Jesus Christ that caused him to count all of his accomplishments as dung in comparison.

Although written from prison, Paul's letter to the Philippians has more references to joy and rejoicing than any of his other letters. Paul told us to rejoice in the Lord always. Just in case this seemed so impossible that people would think Paul surely made a mistake, he said it again. It is only when we find our identities in what Jesus has done for us, and not in what we do for Him, that we can experience joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In the book of Colossians, Paul reminds the believers in Colossae that they have already been made worthy to partake of the inheritance Christ bought for them. They've already been placed in Christ's kingdom and are heirs to all His benefits. Understanding this is the foundation of faith. All the deception that the enemy uses against us violates this fundamental principle. Understanding our completeness in Christ as a total work of grace voids the power of the devil. The only real power the devil ever had against us was our sins. They have been dealt with through the atoning work of Christ.

We are already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We aren't headed toward victory. We are coming from a victory — Christ's total victory over the devil. Colossians is a powerful book that describes victorious Christian living.

These four letters that Paul wrote reveal some of the most powerful truths about the grace of God in the Bible. They provide practical understanding as to how God can love us unconditionally and still be just. Feelings fluctuate, but facts fix our hearts in truth. These letters will help establish you in the unconditional love and grace of God.

I have bound into a book all of the *Life for Today* study notes on the four letters written by Paul to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. I believe that this book could make a profound impact on your understanding of the Gospel therefore, impacting your relationship with the Lord. These are the scriptures that the Lord used to turn my life around. I know they will work for you too, if you will let them. These study guides make these truths simple and

easy to understand. This is an attractive spiral-bound book that has the actual text of these letters printed along with hundreds of my personal notes and marginal references. There is a footnote index in the back of this book with entries allowing you to look up footnotes by subject and have an in-depth study on numerous topics.

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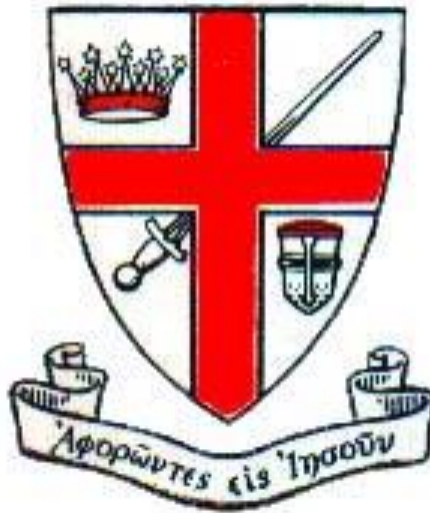
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